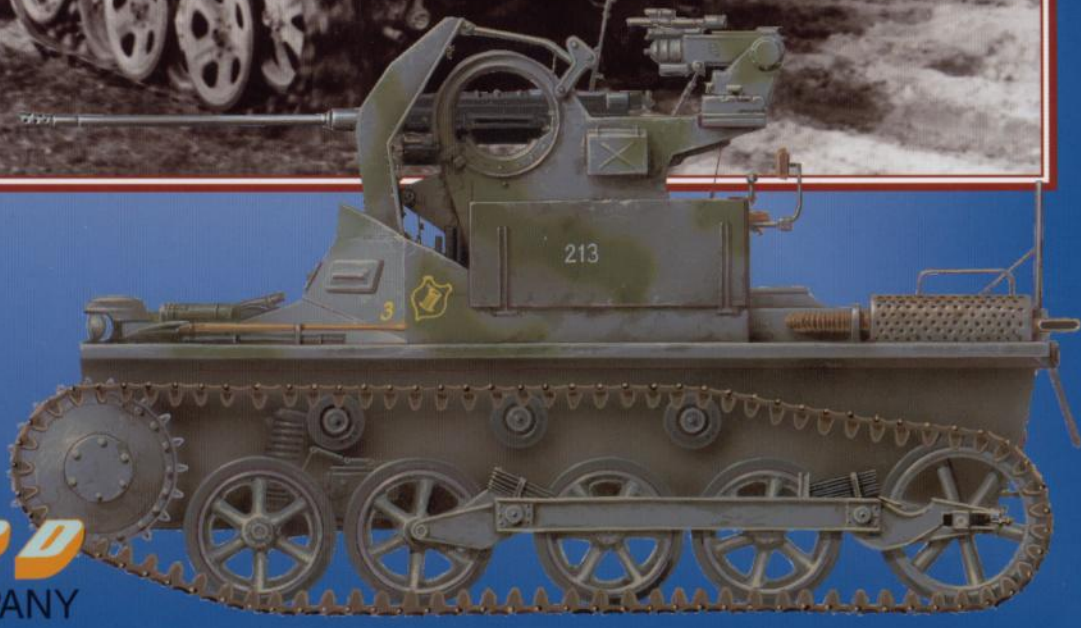
ARMOR AT WAR SERIES

7047

Panzer-Division in RUSSIA

Robert Michulec & John Healey



CONCORD
PUBLICATIONS COMPANY

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Panzer-Division in RUSSIA

Text by Robert Michulec & John Healey
Color plates by Arkadiusz Wróbel

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Copyright © 2004
by CONCORD PUBLICATIONS CO.
603-609 Castle Peak Road
Kong Nam Industrial Building
10/F, B1, Tsuen Wan
New Territories, Hong Kong
www.concord-publications.com

All rights reserved. No part of
this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system or
transmitted in any form or by any
means, electronic, mechanical,
photocopying or otherwise, without
the prior written permission of
Concord Publications Co.

We welcome authors who can help expand our range of books. If you would like to submit material, please feel free to contact us.

We are always on the look-out for new, unpublished photos for this series. If you have photos or slides or information you feel may be useful to future volumes, please send them to us for possible future publication. Full photo credits will be given upon publication.

ISBN 962-361-076-9
printed in Hong Kong

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Introduction

On 22 June 1941, the Wehrmacht with over three million soldiers attacked the Soviet Union. For the invasion the Panzerwaffe managed to field some 3,000 Panzers and were distributed among 19 Panzer-Divisions, 10 motorized infantry divisions, 4 motorized SS divisions, the motorized Großdeutschland Regiment and a few independent assault gun units. Without doubt, the mobility and striking power of the Panzer-Divisions into Russia convinced those in command that the Soviet Union would be conquered within the four-month outlined in the plan. However, the vast expanses of terrain its vehicles had to cover; and huge logistical problems, gave the commanders of the Panzer-Divisions serious difficulties, particularly when the winter arrived and the Russians put up stiff resistance.

In theory, the advantages of the invasion laid almost entirely with the Panzer-Divisions. During the first month of the attack into Russia they had made great progress, encircling almost half a million Red Army troops. However, in spite of the initial successes the Panzer-Divisions still had thousands of miles of the Soviet Union ahead of them. As the divisions pushed even deeper, road surfaces became much worse, and a heavy downpour of rain turned the dirt roads into a quagmire where armored vehicles, even the heavier tanks like the Pz.Kpfw.IV became bogged down.

By early autumn of 1941, the Panzer-Divisions were still fighting and were confronting even stiffer resistance. When the Russian winter finally arrived none of the soldiers were prepared. Many units were already exhausted from the long marches and down to half-strength. Armored units were down to two-fifths of their original tank strength. Food was short and ammunition and fuel also very low, and there was still no winter clothing for the crews. By the end of 1941, the battle weary Panzer-Divisions were no longer fit to carry out proper operations in the face of the enemy. Fortunately, no mobile operations were envisaged for the winter. Instead, while the front lines remained immobilized in the freezing arctic temperatures, the majority of the Panzer-Divisions were hastily pulled out and transferred to France, in order to rest, re-organize and re-train. However, in spite of the re-organization and re-fit, it would be a slow process before the Panzer-Divisions on the Eastern Front were up to strength again. At the end of December 1941 only 405 tanks were operational in H.Gr.Mitte alone with 780 of them out of action. According to official German reports made that month the Panzer-Divisions had lost a staggering 2,735 tanks of the 3,266 that had been dispatched to Russia at the beginning of the invasion. There had also been 847 replacements sent during that first six-month period, and still it did not alleviate the deteriorating situation during the autumn and winter. By the New Year of 1942 not even 1,400 operational and damaged tanks were left of the once mighty Panzer-Divisions that had steamrolled across Russia during the summer months of 1941.

In spite of the dire problems that faced the badly depleted Panzer-Divisions in early 1942, production of tanks continued unabatedly. In accordance with earlier plans more Panzer-Divisions were being raised in order to combat the mammoth task of defeating the Red Army. Although equipping the Panzer-Divisions occurred slowly it was undertaken effectively with the introduction of a number of new fresh-faced divisions.

However, even by the beginning of the summer offensive in May 1942, not all the Panzer-Divisions were fully equipped and ready for combat. Some of the older units for instance did not even have their losses from the Russian winter offensive replaced and were not ready for any type of full scale operation. Depleted Panzer-Divisions were therefore relegated to H.Gr.Nord and H.Gr.Mitte where they were deployed for defensive actions instead. The best equipped Panzer-Divisions were moved south to H.Gr.Sud for operations through the Caucasus. It was here that three new Panzer-Divisions, Nos. 22, 23, and 24 were quickly deployed. The divisions had a combined strength of 495 Panzers, 181 of which were concentrated in the 24.Panzer-Division. Although these Panzer-Divisions were the best equipped for operations in the East, the 22.Panzer-Division for instance was still equipped with 114 of the obsolete Pz.Kpfw.38(t).

In September 1942, a further two Panzer-Divisions were formed to help stem the rout on the Eastern Front. However, by January 1943, the 14., 16., and 24.Panzer-Divisions had been decimated at Stalingrad. The end seemed destined to unfold, but still more resources were poured into the Panzer-Divisions in Russia. Throughout early 1943, the Panzerwaffe built up the strength of the badly depleted Panzer-Divisions, and by the summer of that year they fielded some 24 Panzer-Divisions in Russia alone. By June 1943, 21 Panzer-Divisions, including four Waffen-SS and two Panzer Grenadier divisions were prepared for Operation Zitadelle in the Kursk salient. For this massive attack, which became the largest tank battle of World War Two, the Panzerwaffe were able to muster 17 divisions and 2 brigades with no less than 1,715 Panzers and 147 StuG III assault guns. Each division averaged some 98 Panzers and self-propelled guns, not including self-propelled anti-tank guns. This was a great achievement to put together such a strong force, but the Panzer-Divisions of 1943 were not like those armored forces that victoriously steamrolled across western Russia two years earlier. It was therefore not surprising that the armored force was unable to break through the Soviet defenses. The losses at Kursk were so immense that the Wehrmacht took the first steps of its slow painful retreat back to Germany. The Red Army had managed to destroy no less than 30 divisions, seven of which were Panzer. Now exhausted and badly depleted, the Panzer-Divisions were insufficient to replace the staggering losses, so they fought on in desperation under strength.

By August 1944, the Panzer-Divisions had incurred huge losses in the East, in spite of their courageous activities of trying to hold the Red Army back. During this month alone they had lost almost 1,500 tanks and assault guns. After this, all their reserves were gone. Undermined by severe provisions they continued to fight on with badly depleted divisions organized into various ad hoc groups. With insufficient fuel or incorrect ammunition supplies, desperation filled the ranks until the very end of the war.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

The very first days of war – the front of a German motorized column moves through a destroyed Russian town at the end of June 1941. Note the vehicle and motorcycle combination marked with a black eagle on a white shield. These vehicles, which are probably attached to an infantry unit of Panzergruppe Kleist, are transporting soldiers deep into enemy territory. During Panzergruppe Kleist's rapid advance assault unit troops were often ordered to crash enemy frontline positions and open the way for Panzers.

Under the protection of a Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.B/C a group of soldiers take cover during intensive fighting inside a Lithuanian village on 26 June 1941. The Panzer is marked with a white tactical number '622' on the side of its turret. This vehicle is attached to the 6.Panzer-Division, which fought in a series of hard battles against KV-2 tanks of the Soviet 2nd Tank Division.

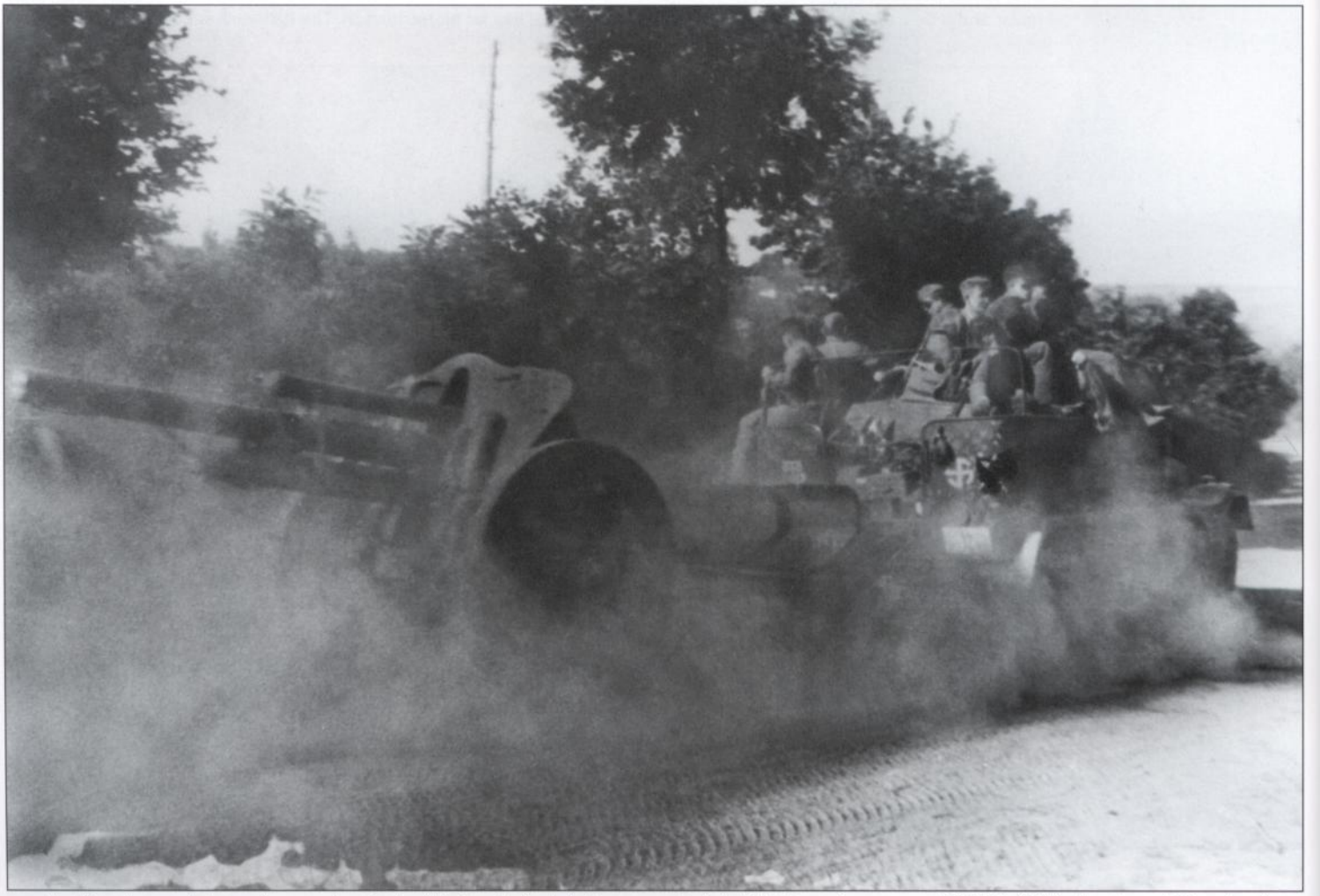
Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Two shots of vehicles entering Minsk city in early July 1941. Both photographs were taken on the same street within few minutes of each other. They show a Pz.Kpfw.38(t) with fuel trailer and a Sd.Kfz.251, which is carrying a German national flag for air recognition. The half-track is equipped with a 'Stuka zu Fuß' frame.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Another shot taken during the first opening phases of Barbarossa. It shows the staff troop of a Panzer Regiment, which is clearly indicated by the letter 'R' painted in two colors on the rear side of the Pz.Kpfw.II turret. These vehicles probably belong to the 7.Panzer-Division, which was one of the first troop formations to enter the capital city of Byelorussia.

A crew of a communication armored troop Pz.Bef.Wg.38(t) are making last minute mechanical adjustments to their vehicle prior to sending it back onto the battlefield in July 1941. Of interest, which can only be partly seen in the photo, is the yellow divisional sign marked 'X'. There is also the letter 'G' painted in white indicating that it belongs to Guderian's Panzergruppe II. The number '2', also painted in white, indicates that is a signal unit of the second company or platoon.



Hurtling along a dusty road somewhere in the Ukraine during late June or early July 1941, is a prime mover of SS-Div. 'Wiking' towing a 105mm howitzer. Through the cloud of dust the divisional emblem and other markings can clearly be seen visible on the rear of the vehicle.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Across the sprawling Russian steppe an unidentified Panzer-Division is in action during early August 1941. On left a column of Pz.Kpfw.IIIs can be seen moving forward towards knocked out enemy positions. Note the Sd.Kfz.251 with small Red Cross marking on the rear. In summer of 1941 the Panzer-Divisions had only small number of Sd.Kfz.251 vehicles, and although they were primarily used to move troops from one battle zone to another, they were also very useful for collecting wounded soldiers from the field.

An interesting photograph: in the thick of battle a tank crewmember has single handedly captured a Russian soldier during intensive fighting in the first week of July 1941. The tank war was very brutal. Commanders were constantly compelled to move their armored formations forward as fast as possible, and consequently not able to take prisoners.

Spear heading the most forward echelons of the German war machine in Russia is a Panzer Regiment comprising of staff tanks of II.Abteilung. A knocked out BT-7 tank can be seen in flames as Red Army troops defend their positions to the grim death. Halted on the road outside the burning village there are two Pz.Kpfw.IIIs, including a 'Befehlswagen', and an Sd.Kfz.250 and rare Sd.Kfz.253. Note the markings, 'II03' or 'III02', on the nearest Pz.Kpfw.III. Also of interest is the damaged turret bin stored on its engine deck.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

A very rare armored observation half-track Sd.Kfz.253 protecting German soldiers whilst they pause for rest by a riverside at the end of August 1941. The vehicle was primarily built for artillery and command duties, but during the early part of the war on the Eastern Front it was given a variety of other task by various units, including the rapid movement of troops to one battle position to another.

A column of Henschel 33D1 medium trucks transports pontoon boats in early September 1941. Bridge building was a necessity in the vast sprawling areas of the Soviet Union where wide rivers constantly proved difficult to cross. These units regularly supported the armored spearhead closely in order to maintain the momentum of the advance.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

A prime mover attached to a Flak unit crosses the Desna River in late September 1941. This vehicle is part of the 11.Panzer-Division, which is indicated by a 'ghost' symbol painted on the left mudguard. Note the divisional tactical circle sign painted on the right mudguard. This indicates that this particular vehicle was employed in a Luftwaffe Abteilung. The license plate is WL 141935.

Another photograph of troops crossing the Desna River in September 1941. A Horch cross-country Kfz.4 car is being transported by a pontoon ferry. The vehicle can be seen covered lightly with foliage.

Early October 1941 – an armored column during its drive on Moscow takes large numbers of POWs. Three Pz.Kpfw.IVs can be seen along with a Pz.Kpfw.III and a Pz.Kpfw.II. Of interest is the Pz.Kpfw.IVs which have clearly trained their gun barrels in readiness for quick defense fire.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Vehicles of the 7.Panzer-Division have become embroiled in a heavy traffic jam on a road leading east towards Moscow during early October 1941. A variety of armored vehicles can clearly be identified including various light Horch cross-country cars. Note the Pz.Kpfw.38(t), the letter 'Y' emblem painted in yellow on the rear of its turret is clearly visible here.

A supply truck attached to an anti-aircraft unit, most probably one of the Luftwaffe anti-aircraft battalions supporting Panzergruppe Guderian during its drive through Orel city in October 1941. The city was captured on 3 October by the 4.Panzer-Division. Note the markings painted on the rear of the vehicle, including typical Luftwaffe tactical signs.

The 11.Panzer-Division, known as the so-called 'ghost-division', enters a village in October 1941. Here a Pz.Kpfw.III of the I.Abteilung of the 5th tank of the 3rd platoon meets a group of surrendering Red Army troops following a series of heavy armored strikes on the village.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

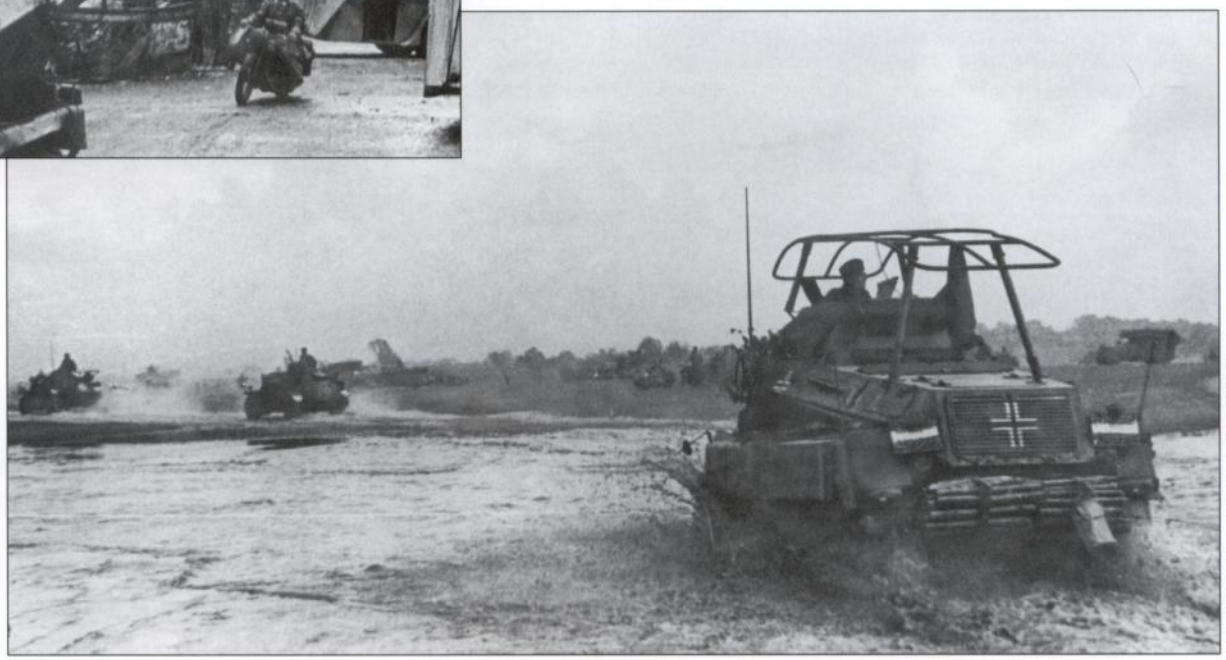
Tanks and grenadiers of the 11.Panzer-Division crosses a river during the same period. A Pz.Kpfw.III leads the drive with two Pz.Kpfw.II's following in the rear. Large numbers of Pz.Kpfw.II's were used in Russia during the early phases of the campaign. However, despite it's extensive use the tank was under-gunned and suffered from very thin armor, which offered minimal protection in battle.

Here three photographs show the 14.Panzer-Division during the battle of Rostov in November 1941. Note the Pz.Kpfw. II which has been given a yellow code '6L1' on the turret. This code indicated that the vehicle was the 1st tank of the light platoon in the 6th Company. Despite the success of the Panzer Divisions in Russia, by November 1941 their tank strength had been reduced by 65 per cent. To make matters worse by this period of the war the Russian winter in all its cruelty, was now beginning to bite.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Sd.Kfz.251/10 Ausf.A armed with 3.7cm anti-tank gun PaK36 leads an infantry troop during intensive fighting in the Kalinin area in late November. Note that the crew using sandbags around the gun shield for additional protection.

The 3rd platoon of an unknown reconnaissance troop entering Kharkov city in Sd.Kfz.250 followed by a motorcyclist in early November 1941. Note the additional MG34 machine gun mounted inside the combat compartment of the half-track for anti-aircraft defense. This was a very rare piece of armament.



Armored cars belonging to a reconnaissance battalion crossing a flooded field somewhere in the Ukraine in early November 1941. The leading vehicle is a Sd.Kfz.221 and has a national flag for aerial recognition. The Sd.Kfz.263 8-Rad Panzerfunkwagen has almost no markings.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

A long column of supply vehicles blocked on a narrow Soviet highway after first serious snowfall in late November 1941. The congested roads together with the harsh winter weather caused unprecedented difficulties for the armored divisions of the Panzer arm during the turn of November and December 1941.

What became one of the most familiar problems during the first winter in Russia in late 1941/early 1942. The driver of this prime mover belonging to the 7th battery of an artillery regiment has careered into deep snow following a heavy snowstorm. To remove such a heavy vehicle from the snow was not an easy task, especially when heavy equipment like this one was specially employed on the Eastern Front for towing other vehicles that had either developed mechanical problems or become mired in the freezing snow. Note the style of engine covering, which helped to keep it warm.

A white camouflaged heavy troop carrier Horch Kfz.18 crosses a frozen river in the middle of December 1941. Despite the low temperatures the crew are still driving the vehicle without the roof.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Two Horch cross-country cars in an open field covered with deep snow in March 1942. Both vehicles carry interesting markings. The left car displays the unit emblem of a black cross on a white shield, whilst the other vehicle carries an unusual unit emblem of an eye on a white square. The road markings on the mudguards are painted with white dots.

Soldiers trying to dig out a Horch Kfz.18 following a severe snowstorm during mid-December 1941. The vehicle has been protected from the harsh temperatures by what troops called a 'snow-garage'.

Soldiers wearing their winter camouflage smocks prepare to move forward in the snow with a Pz.Kpfw.III during operations somewhere in Russia in early March 1942. The tank has received an application of winter white wash camouflage paint. Note the soldier on the engine deck with his MG34 machine gun.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Following a column of Pz.Kpfw.III's a German PaK unit dressed in white camouflage smocks push forward through a forest road somewhere in the northern part of Russia in early March 1942. During operations on the Eastern Front both the Wehrmacht and Panzerwaffe experienced different conditions of terrain in various parts of the country. In the northern areas it was very difficult and hard going for the Panzer-Divisions, especially with uneven ground, coupled with long winters. However, in the south the conditions were more or less favorable, and thus most tank battles were fought in the Ukraine and southern Russia.

A Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.F creeps into a village strongly defended by Red Army troops in late February 1942. Although very powerful, the F variant was only capable of defeating the Soviet KV-1 and T-34 at short ranges. The introduction of the up gunned Ausf.F2 (G) gave the Germans better superiority on the battlefield. The tank has been given an application of winter camouflage paint a few weeks earlier, but has been partly removed by the crew deliberately in an attempt to break up the camouflage as the winter thaw begins.

A much needed respite from combat. Here German troops, ski infantry and transport service crews meet in a village sometime in early March 1942. Note the very interesting camouflage pattern of the light Horch cross country car and Ford-model truck.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

A tank crewman poses for the camera from the side hatch of a Pz.Kpfw.III in March 1942. The tank still carries remains of winter whitewash paint.

The crew of a Pz.Kpfw.III, armed with a short 5cm gun, surveyors a village in March 1942. There are remnants of whitewash on the tank, especially on the turret, where we can see the tactical number '222', and something else, possibly an emblem. Note the track links attached to the turret for additional armored protection.

Here an armored troop pauses from intensive fighting on the battlefield and takes cover in a snow-covered village during the beginning of March 1942. On the left of the photograph there are two Pz.Kpfw.IIIs, and to the right next to a house an early variant StuG III. All the vehicles carry a solid white coat of winter camouflage and no markings.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

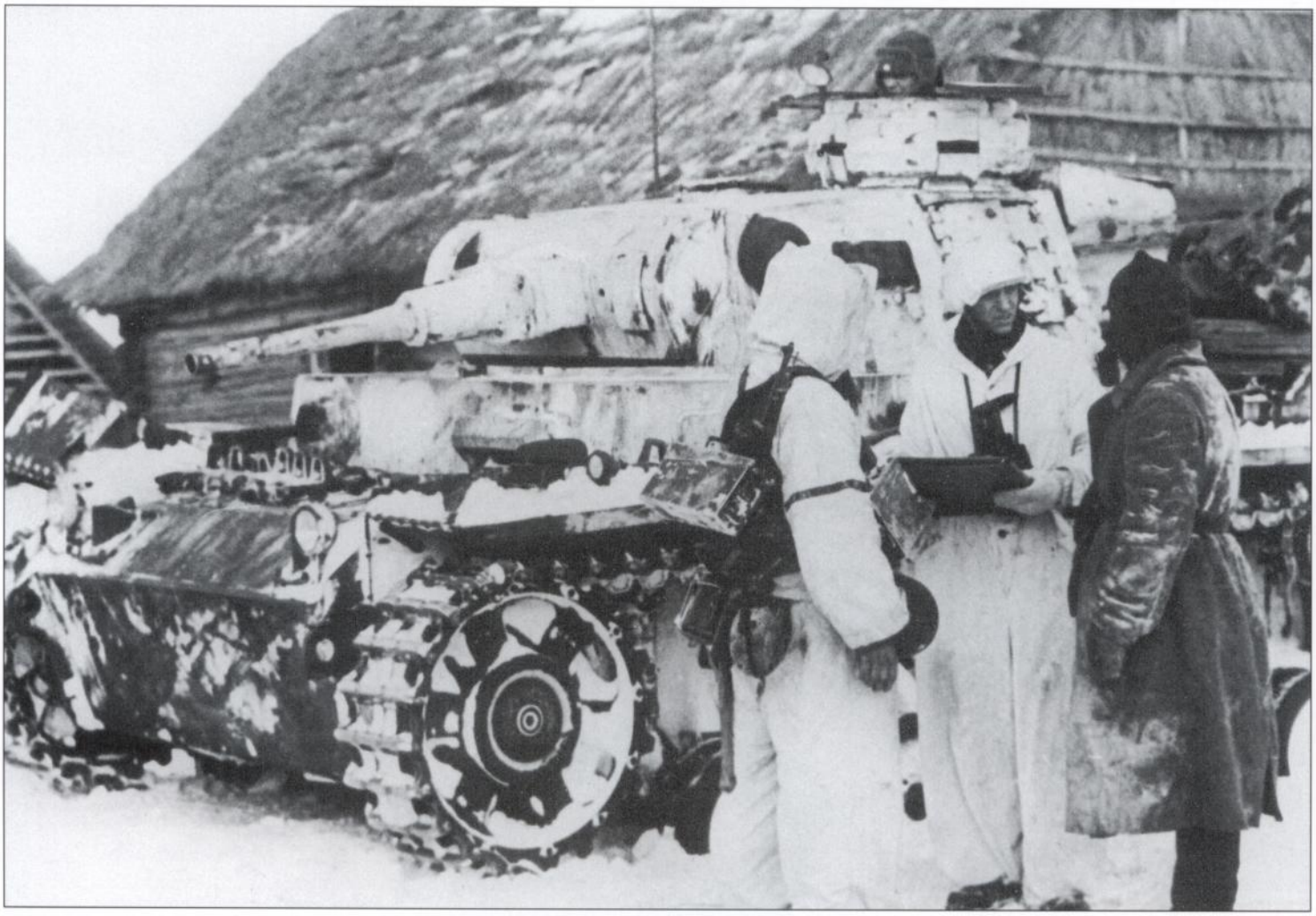
A soldier repairs a Pz.Kpfw.IV during the early winter of 1942. The severe weather in Russia not only reduced the capabilities of the troops but also put terrible strain on the vehicles themselves. The armored drive on Moscow in late 1941 would be the first major defeat of the Panzerwaffe in which they lost large numbers of heavy equipment.

Two photographs showing an armored group approaching a village during a battle in February 1942. The photos vividly illustrate just how well the dark painted tanks were easy to identify against the snow. This also counts for the high percentage of German tank losses against well-trained Red Army anti-tank gunners. In the top photo there are three Pz.Kpfw.IV and two Sd.Kfz.251 using a three-pronged attack formation. Note that the crew of the Sd.Kfz.251 Ausf.A has the MG34 armored shield mounted on the rear of the vehicle, and not on the front.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Soldiers trying to tow a truck out of the snow. Both vehicles are covered with whitewash paint. The severe weather took a terrible toll on the Panzer-Divisions in Russia. They were totally unprepared for the winter conditions, and although these trucks have camouflage paint, most units did not have enough supplies of whitewash. Therefore virtually all crews in the first winter had to improvise.

A Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.B/C dug into the snow up to its turret in March 1942. This tank was employed in the 5.Panzer-Division and can be recognized because of the typical style of camouflaging employed in this division. Note the MG34 position dug into the snow.



In front of a Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.J, a unit commander tries to obtain information from a Soviet POW. This tank has received a uniform application of white winter camouflage paint over the dark sand base. A space has been left for the tactical number '552', painted in red on the turret with a white outline.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Soldiers frantically dig out a Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.J of the 5.Panzer-Division following a severe snowstorm in late March 1942. It is well worth noting that there is only one known tank of this division's unit which had a three-color winter camouflage scheme composed of white areas applied over a green sand base.

A column of StuG's support infantry somewhere on the central sector of the Eastern Front, possibly in the Demyansk area in early April 1942. Note the German national flag draped over the StuG for aerial recognition. The StuG III proved an indispensable assault gun to the Panzer-Divisions on the Eastern Front and was a very valuable support vehicle.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

A Krupp Protze truck towing a 2cm anti-aircraft Flak gun, which are both camouflaged with winter whitewash paint. With growing shortages in the East Luftwaffe units were hastily incorporated into Panzer-Divisions to help bolster the dwindling firepower. Note the kill markings on the Flak gun shield.

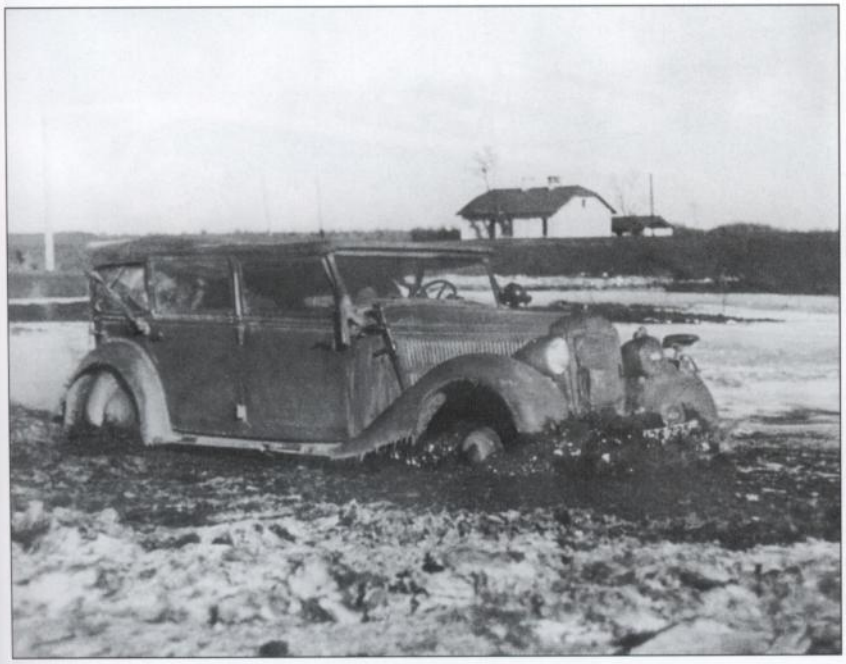
A column of trucks move along a road somewhere in Russia during the winter thaw in March 1942. The first vehicle is possibly a captured Russian truck, whilst the other two following closely behind are French. Note how well the vehicles have received a coating of winter camouflage paint.

A Krupp Protze truck during the winter thaw of early 1942. A typical Panzer-Division consisted of literally dozens of various light and heavy support vehicles. Divisional support prior to the winter of 1941 amounted to some 942 light and 1133 heavy lorries. However, by the early spring of 1942 this total had been reduced in some divisions by 60%.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

This early spring of 1942, and on the Eastern Front a group of soldiers try desperately to push their truck through the mire. Such struggles were a common sight. Support vehicles, though a necessity, were given low priority on the road dispatcher's list. The truck has interesting markings. On the left mudguard note the unit emblem.

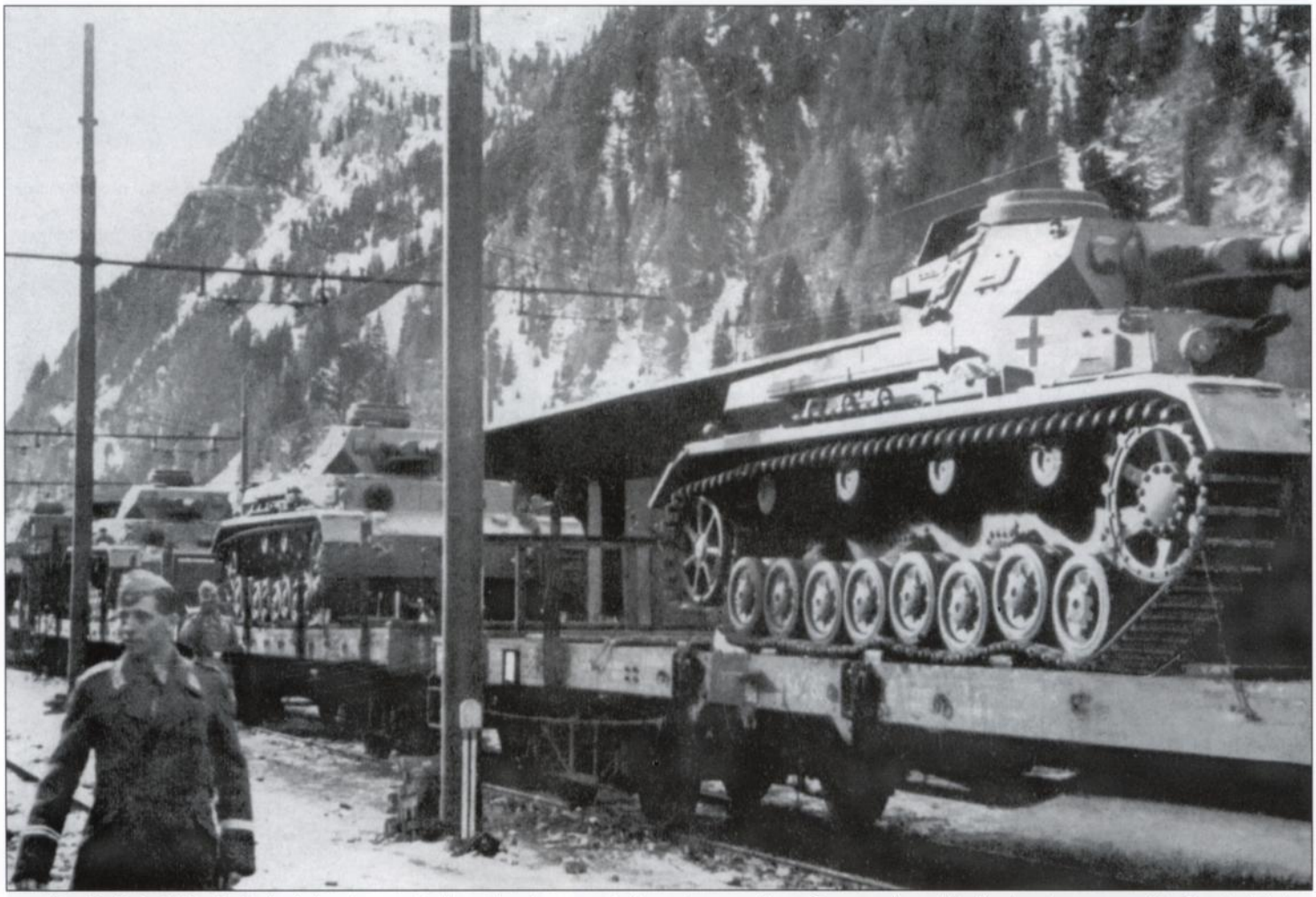
Within very few weeks of the thaw in April and May 1942 the roads in Russia had changed into streams of mud or water. The water produced from the thaw was enough to immobilize whole columns of wheeled transport, and even tracked vehicles. Here an Sd.Kfz.10 light prime mover struggles along a road covered with muddy water.



In these two photographs it vividly illustrates the extent of the thaw and how it hindered the movement of transport across Russia. German commanders observed with alarm how roads simply vanished and soon realized how dependent they were on the few all-weather roads that had been built in western Russia.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Following the first harsh winter campaign of early 1942 the Panzer-Divisions were once again unleashed for further combat with deep penetrating strikes south through the Crimea during early May 1942. The main task of eliminating enemy resistance was given to the 21.Panzer-Division on the Kerch Peninsula. Here in this photograph we see Russian prisoners passing a Sd.Kfz.221 or 223 light armored radio car of the 21.Panzer-Division in the Crimea. The vehicle carries a national cross and license plate WH ?4098. On the left mudguard there is a divisional symbol painted in white with a number '5'. This indicates that it belongs to the 5.Kradschütz Kompanie.



New Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.F tanks being transported by railroad prepare to leave from southern Germany bound for the long journey east to Russia. Moving armor by rail was the quickest and most effective way of transporting the components of a Panzer-Division from one area to another. Even in Russia the Germans used the rail system to maximum effect and constantly moved armor to various battlefronts very quickly.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

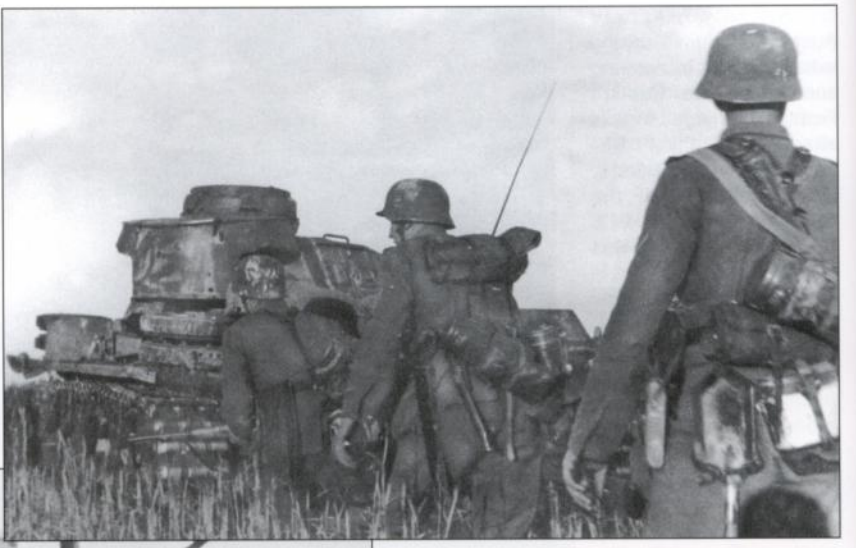
A Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.F2(G) during exercises prior to entering combat on the Eastern Front. This vehicle was attached to the 1.SS-Pz.Gren.Div. 'LSSAH', which was one of the best-armed units in 1942. However, the 'LSSAH' was not used on the frontline in the East during this year.

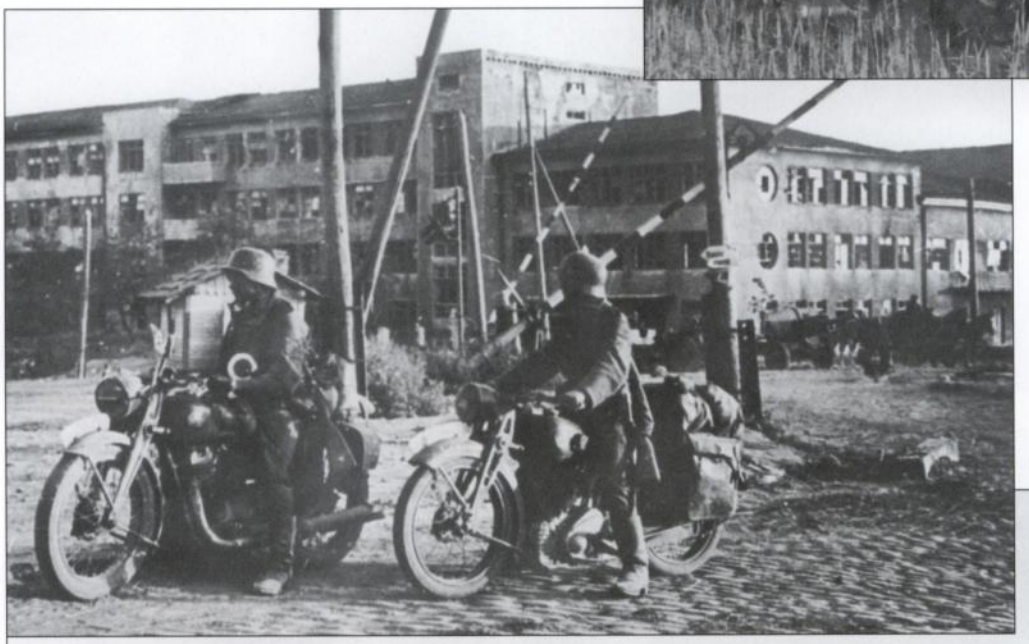
Another photograph of the Panzertrupp training, this time with an infantry squad in the late summer of 1942. This panzer is an old Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.G model, not used in frontline service at this time. The tank is finished in overall dark-gray.

Troops of the 23.Panzer-Division take Red Army prisoners in the Kharkov area during early June 1942, following a successful German armored counterattack. Russian commanders had totally underestimated the strength of the Panzer-Divisions in the Kharkov area and as a consequence hundreds of thousands of their soldiers were to lose their lives in one of the most catastrophic offensives on the Eastern Front. Note the unusual markings on the sidecar.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Early July 1942 and a group of soldiers follow a Pz.Kpfw.III into action. Note that the tank has the same camouflage pattern as the helmets of the troops it protects. This type of identical camouflage scheme for both soldiers and armor was common, especially with panzer grenadier divisions.





Two photographs showing German troops entering Rostov during early July 1942. Two motorcyclists are waiting at a crossroads to direct arriving traffic, like anti-tank batteries seen on the bottom photo, for example. A Sd.Kfz.10 draped with foliage passes the motorcyclists bound for the city center. The half-track is towing a well-camouflaged PaK 40, which was still a rare piece of equipment during this period.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

A motorcycle unit crosses one of the many rivers in the Rostov area during July 1942. All the motorcycles have sidecar combinations. The motorcycle was used for both combat and reconnaissance roles in the Panzer-Divisions. Each Panzer-Division incorporated hundreds of motorcycles, which were distributed among the panzer and rifle regiments, flak detachments, artillery regiments, panzer engineers, supply units, panzer signals and of course reconnaissance units.

An armored spearhead surveys a Soviet field installation in Rostov in July 1942. A Sd.Kfz.250 attached to the 23.Panzer-Division halts in front of an enemy fortification. The half-track is carrying the divisional emblem and tactical sign of the motorized infantry. This Wehrmacht unit was co-operating with SS-soldiers of the SS-Division 'Wiking', which can be seen on the right.

Heavy artillery crosses an anti-tank ditch, which has been made passable by 'Wiking' pioneers just after the capture of Rostov in July 1942. It is interesting to note that a French Hotchkiss tank, minus the turret, has been pressed into service in order to tow the 15cm howitzer.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Panzer crewmen were the elite units of the Panzer-Divisions of Hitler's war machine. They featured regularly in his propaganda magazines and on newsreels and were the most potent symbol of the blitzkrieg warfare. Here a cameraman films a passing Pz.Kpfw.III of the SS-Division 'Wiking' in the Caucasus in August 1942.

The crew of a Pz.Kpfw.II of the 24.Panzer-Division watches Soviet soldiers surrender following bitter fighting in southern Russia in mid-July 1942. To the many that fought on the battlefield, even the smallest tanks like the Pz.Kpfw.II projected an aura of invincibility.

More Soviet troops surrender, their fate unknown. This vehicle is possibly from the same unit in southern Russia in mid-July 1942. On the rear of the Sd.Kfz.250/3 communication half-track the tactical symbol and number of the signal unit of the division can be seen painted in white.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

A Panzer-Division moves deep into enemy territory during the beginning of July 1942. The division smashes entire Soviet units in its wake. In this photograph a number of Russian trucks have been set ablaze, probably from the machine gun fire of the advancing Pz.Kpfw.III's.

A dismounted motorcyclist marks the direction on an oil drum for its divisional units to follow. Although relegated from actual combat duties by this period, casualties among motorcyclists still remained high in the Panzer-Divisions.

Two motorcyclists survey a map during their advance through the Voronezh area, during June or July 1942. During the early part of the war, a great number of motorcyclists rode into battle and dismounted to fight. They were, however, vulnerable to small arms fire and booby traps, and by late 1941, the motorcyclist was gradually relegated from the front lines to various reconnaissance and communication duties.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Long column of motorcycle combinations passing over a pontoon bridge followed by a Horch cross-country car. The leading BMW motorcycle with combination is marked with a white or red circle with the number '223' inside. The license plate appears to read WH 57827.

Soldiers march forward into action under the protection of a Pz.Kpfw.III. This unit belongs to the famous 'Großdeutschland' division. The division fought almost exclusively in the central and southern sectors of the Eastern Front and eventually became known as Hitler's 'trouble shooters' and were deployed wherever the need was greatest.

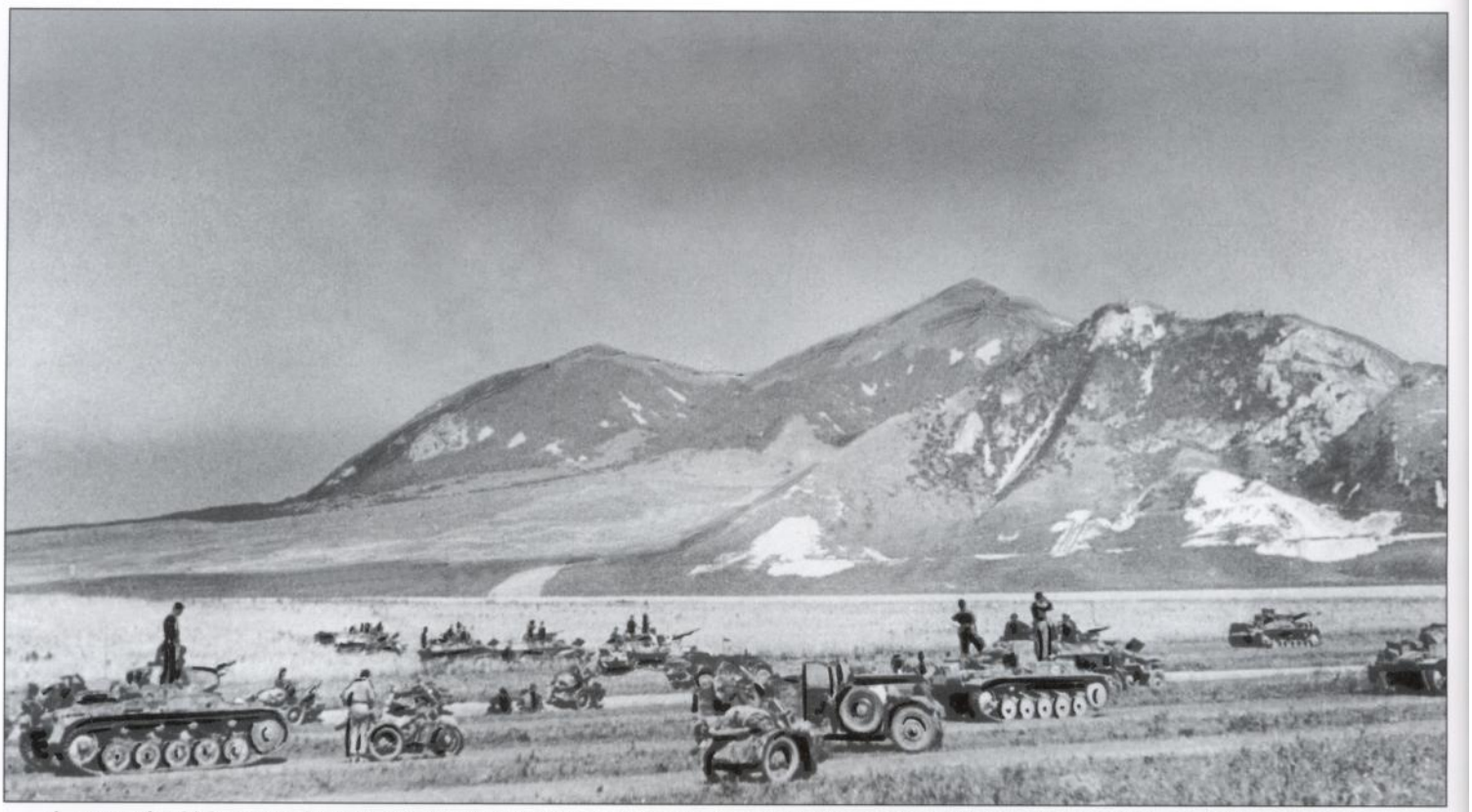
A light Horch staff car with motorcycle combination crosses an endless grass field during its advance to Voronezh in early July 1942. Note the license plate of the motorcycle, which is fixed to the spare wheel on the sidecar combination. One of the hazards of traveling by motorcycle, especially in Russia was the lack of good quality roads.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Unidentified vehicles of a Panzer-Division crossing the endless Russian steppes in the Don-bend area in July-August 1942. The tank is a Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.J and armed with the new up gunned 5cm barrel.

Two photographs showing the latest arrivals of Sd.Kfz.132 introduced into the Panzer-Divisions in 1942. These light anti-tank self-propelled guns were built on the LaS 138 chassis. They were armed with the captured Soviet 7.62cm anti-tank gun. In these photographs we see a number of these vehicles moving along a road somewhere in southern Russia. Throughout its service in the Panzer-Divisions in Russia the Sd.Kfz.132 was an effective mobile anti-tank weapon that was always on hand to provide infantry anti-tank support.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

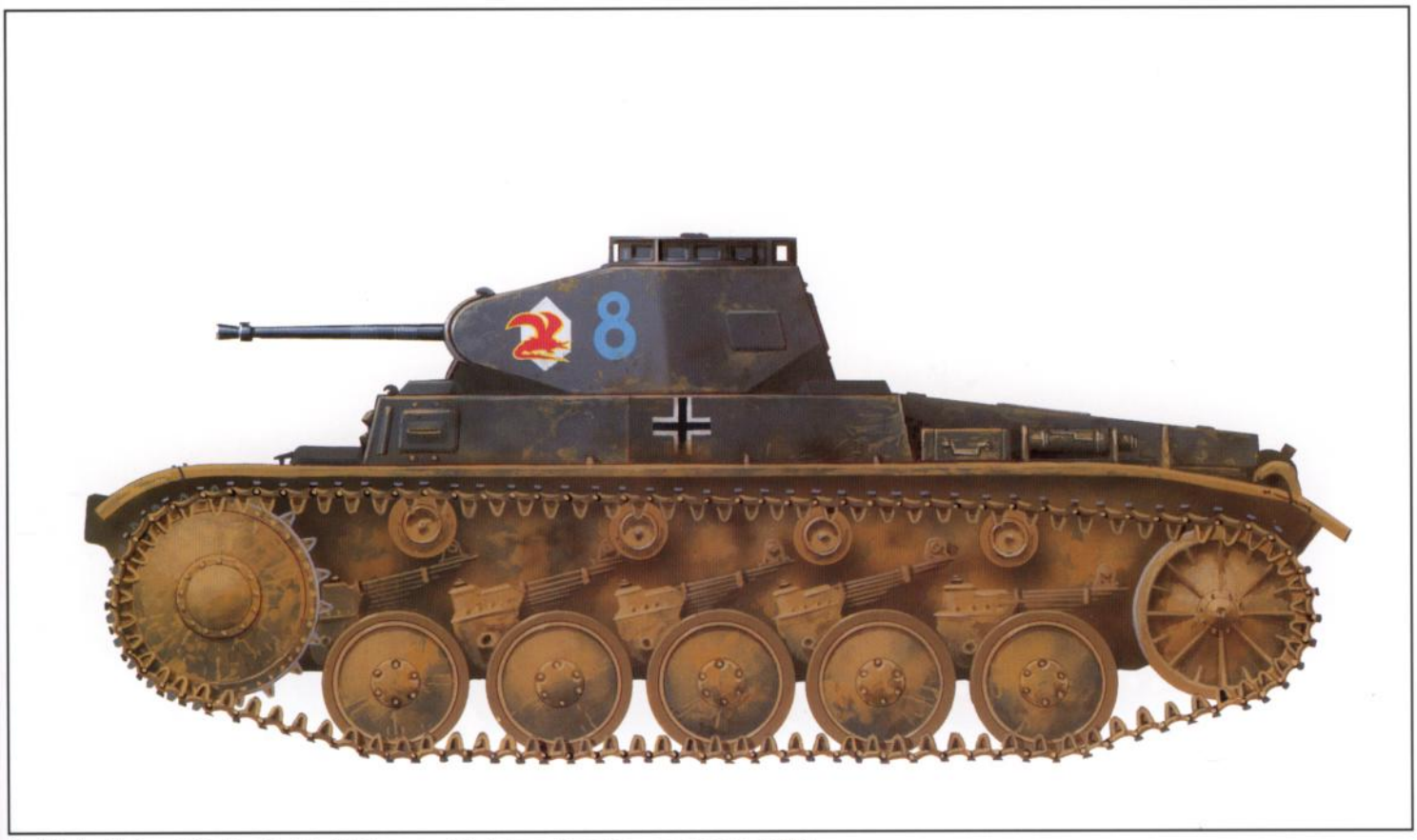


A group of vehicles spread out across the Russian steppe in September 1942. There are a number of Pz.Kpfw.IIIs, Pz.Kpfw.IIs as well as a few Sd.Kfz.251s. This unit is heavily armed with 3.7cm PaK 36 anti-tank guns.

Moving through dense undergrowth close to the Caucasus Mountains is a Sd.Kfz.222. The vehicle appears to be painted in a three-color camouflage scheme of green and brown wavy lines applied over the dark sand base.

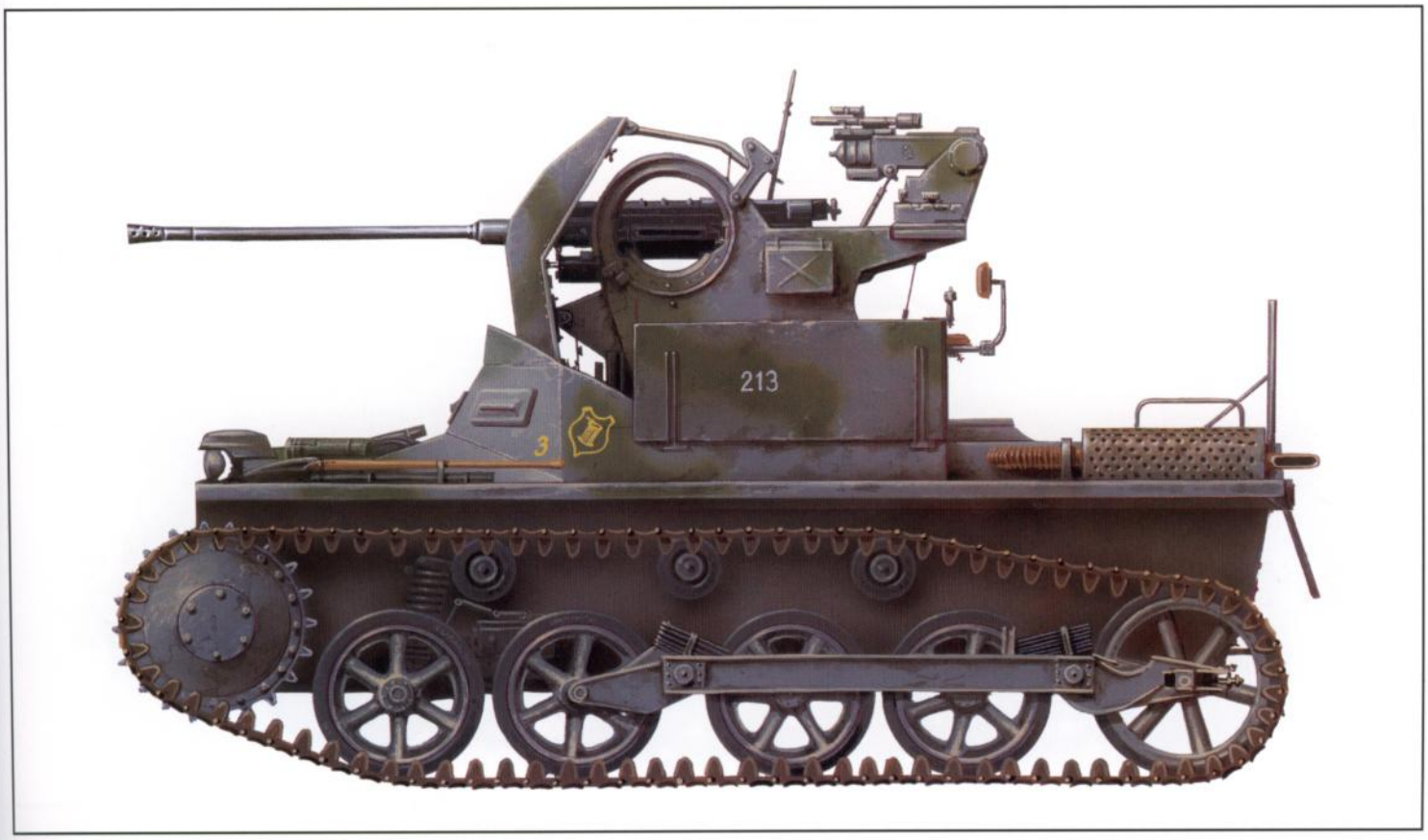
An Sd.Kfz.10 pulls into one of the many Caucasian villages that littered the area. This vehicle is more than likely armed with a 2cm Flak38 anti-tank gun. The Sd.Kfz.10 was used extensively in Russia and provided much needed support in the Panzer-Divisions during their advance in the East.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer



Pz.Kpfw.II Ausf.C, Pz.Rgt.3, 2.Panzer-Division, Russia, summer 1941

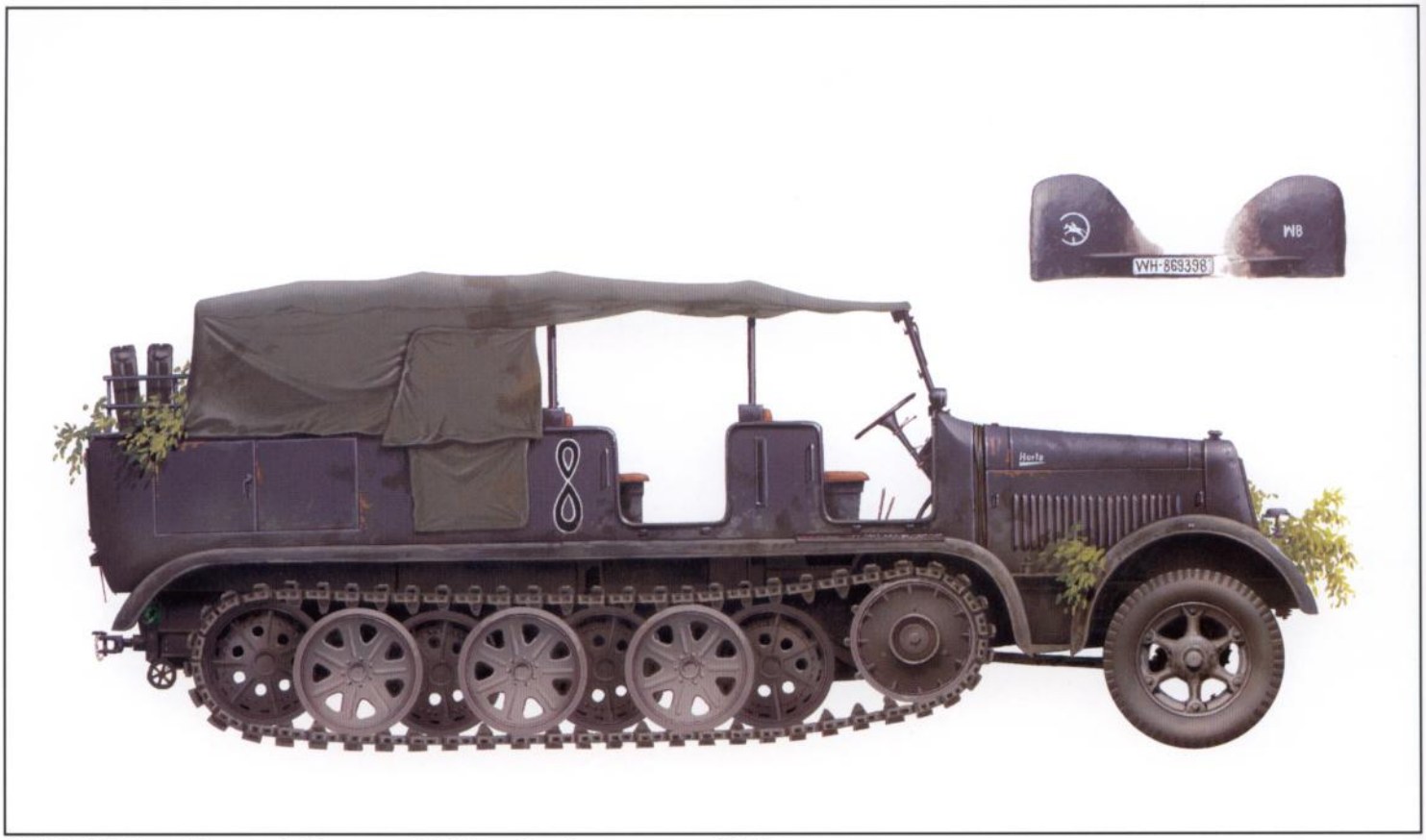
This tank is finished in overall dark gray and carries the divisional insignia, which is painted in red with a yellow outline on a whitebackground. The tactical number '8' is painted in blue on the left side of the turret. A standard white outline national cross is painted on the side of the stowage bin.



Pz.Kpfw.I Ausf.A, Art.Rgt.213, Russia, summer 1941

Armed with a 2cm Flakvierling 38 this self-propelled anti-aircraft gun was made by mounting the 2cm Flak gun on the unarmored chassis of the Pz.Kpfw.I. It is painted in overall dark gray with dark green patches applied over the whole vehicle. The tactical number '213' is painted in white on the side of the vehicle. The number '3' painted in yellow indicates that it is the third gun in the battery.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer



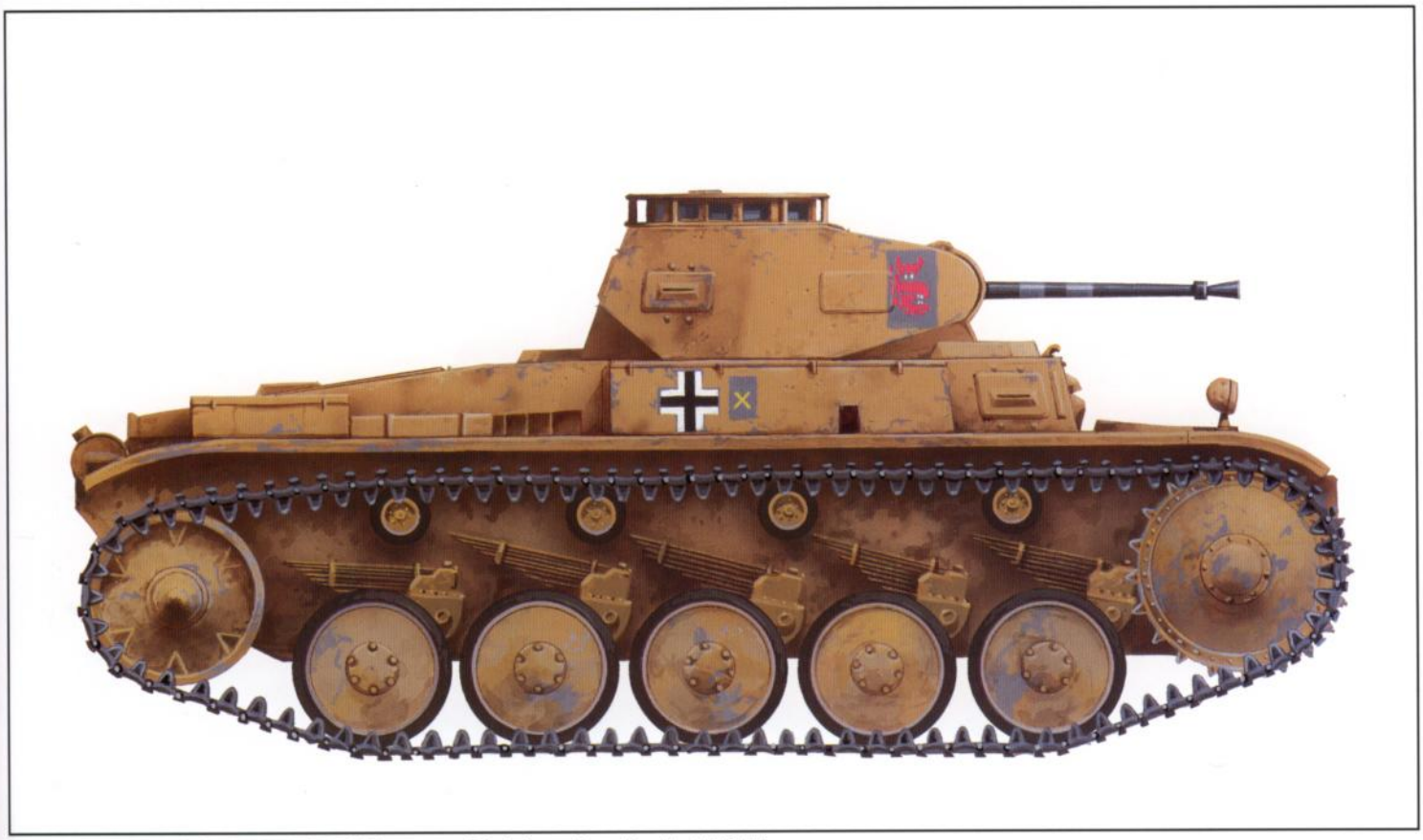
Sd.Kfz.7 Prime Mover, 24.Panzer-Division, Russia, summer 1941

This half-track is finished in overall dark gray and carries the divisional emblem, a yellow horse and rider within a yellow circle. The tactical number '8' is painted on the side in black with a thick outline.

Ford/Marmon-Harrington Armored Car, 8.Panzer-Division, Russia, summer 1941

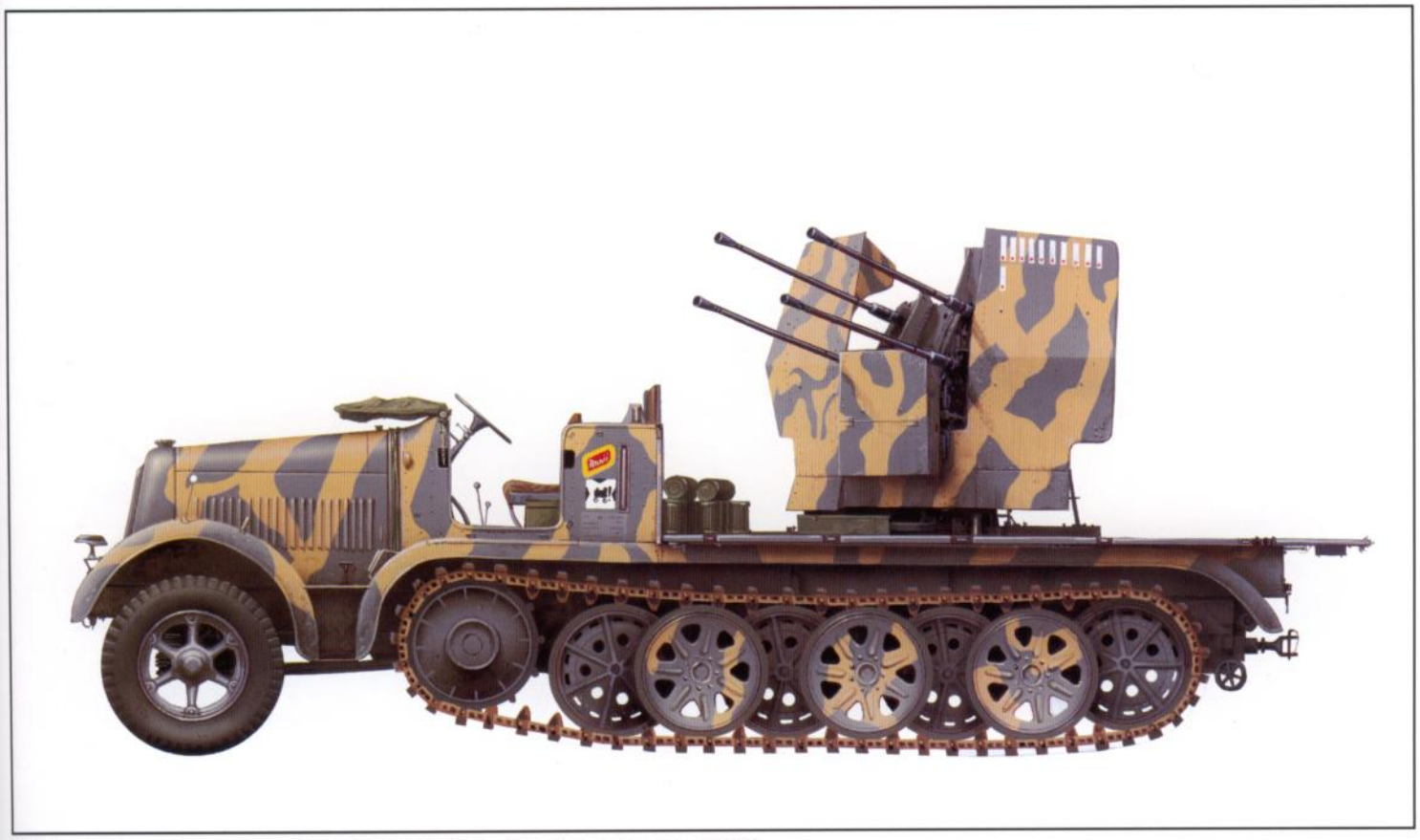
This armored car was used by the Belgian Army to tow the 47mm anti-tank gun and in 1940, the German Army captured several of them intact and pressed them into service with the Panzer-Divisions. This vehicle is painted in overall dark gray with the yellow Panzer-Division insignia on the side of the front offside door. A white outline national cross has been applied to the rear offside door. Two Panzer-Division command pennants are also visible, one attached to the mudguard and the other on the rear of the vehicle.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer



Pz.Kpfw.II Ausf.C, Pz.Rgt.31, 5.Panzer-Division, Russia, fall 1941

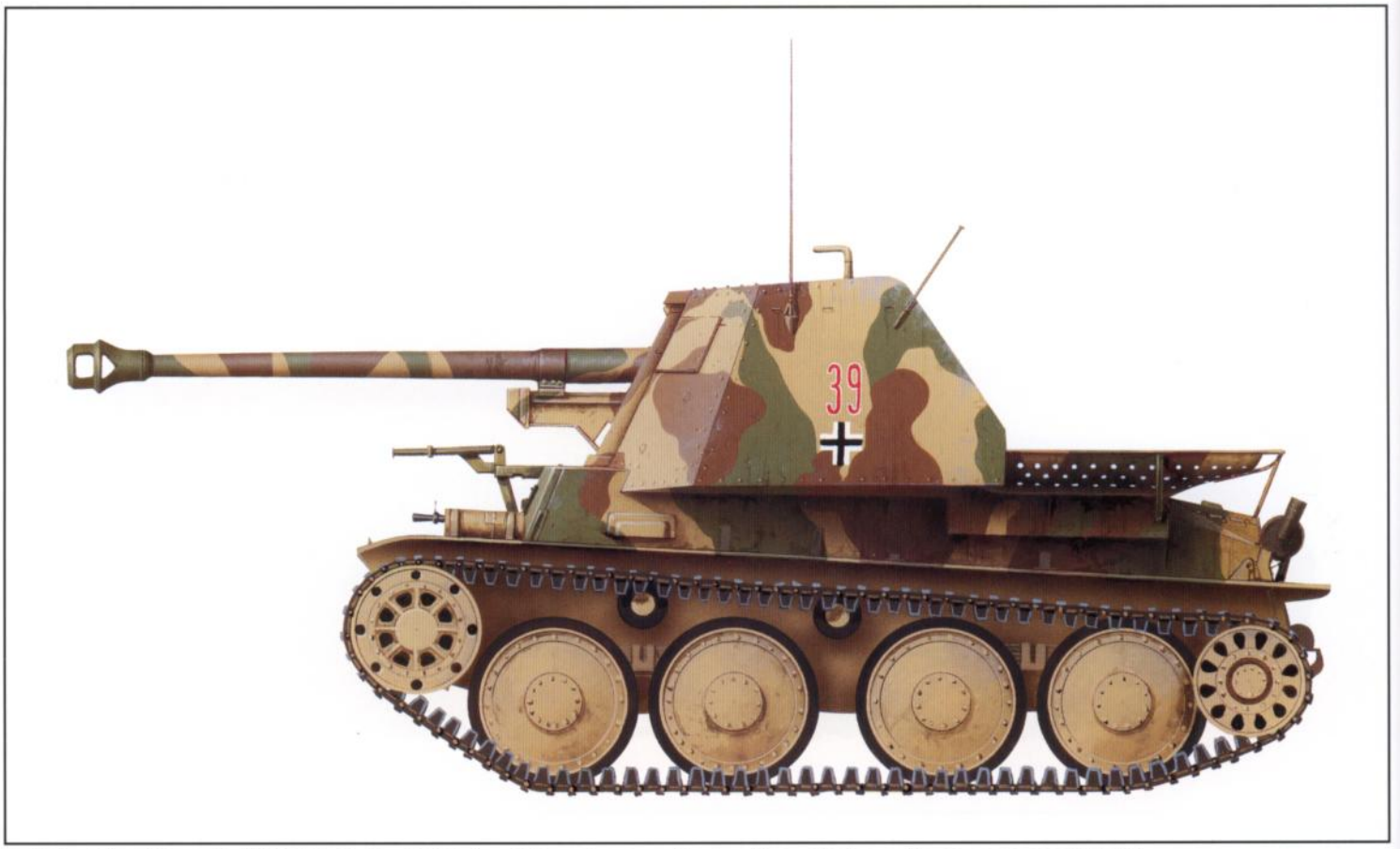
This Pz.Kpfw.II is painted in the yellow-brown and gray-green authorized for armored vehicles in North Africa. 5.Panzer-Division was scheduled to ship to North Africa in 1941 but was sent to Russia in the fall instead with its vehicles painted in North Africa colors. On the right turret the divisional insignia, a devil's head, can be seen painted in red on a dark gray rectangle.



Sd.Kfz.7/1, unknown Luftwaffe Flak Abt., Russia, summer 1942

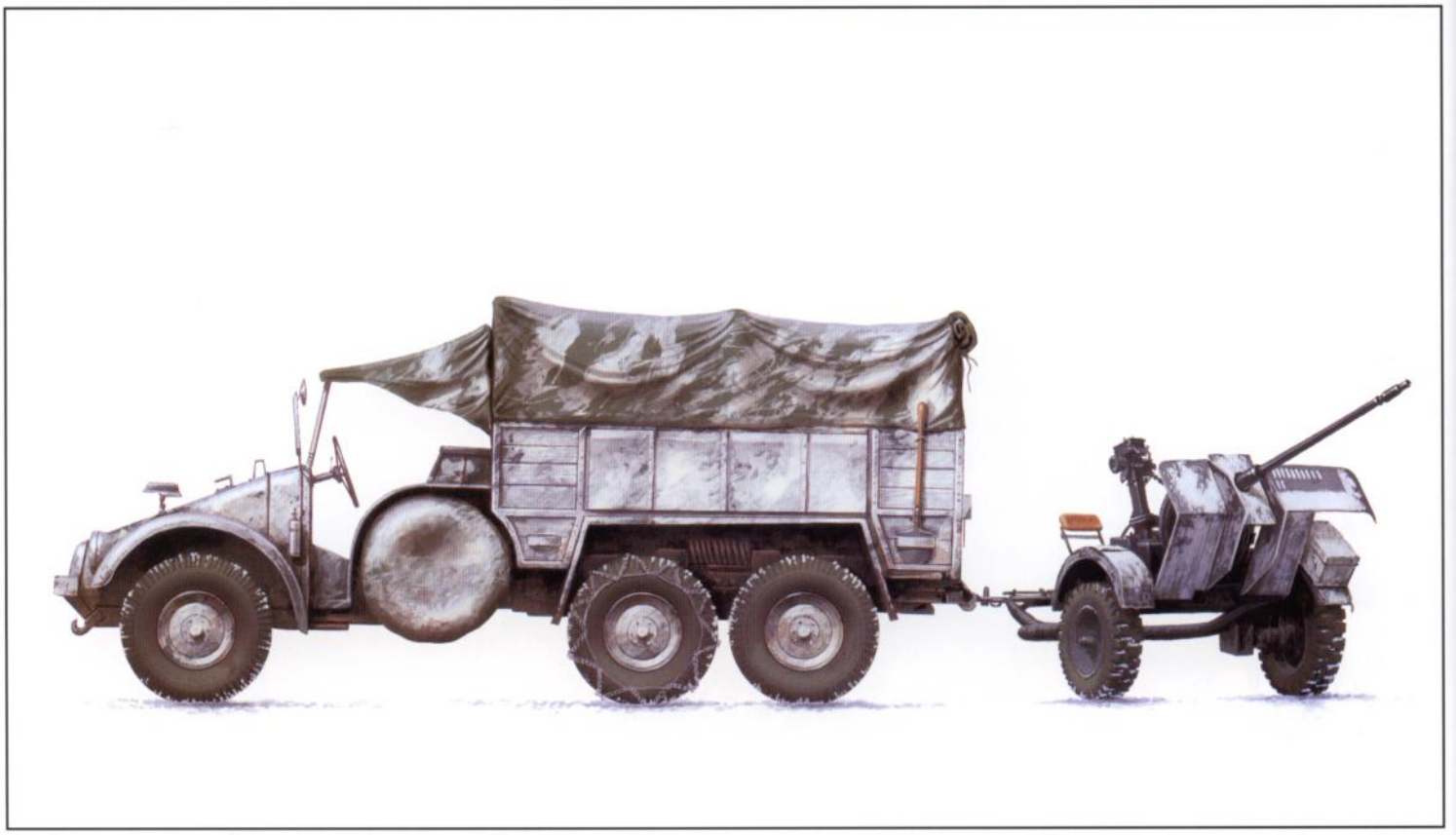
This Flak half-track, armed with four 2cm Flakvierling 38, has a camouflage spray of light sand lines applied in a wavy pattern over the vehicle and gun.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer



Sd.Kfz.139 7.5cm PaK 40 Pz.Kpfw.38(t) Ausf.H, unknown Pz.Jg.Abt., Eastern Front, summer 1942

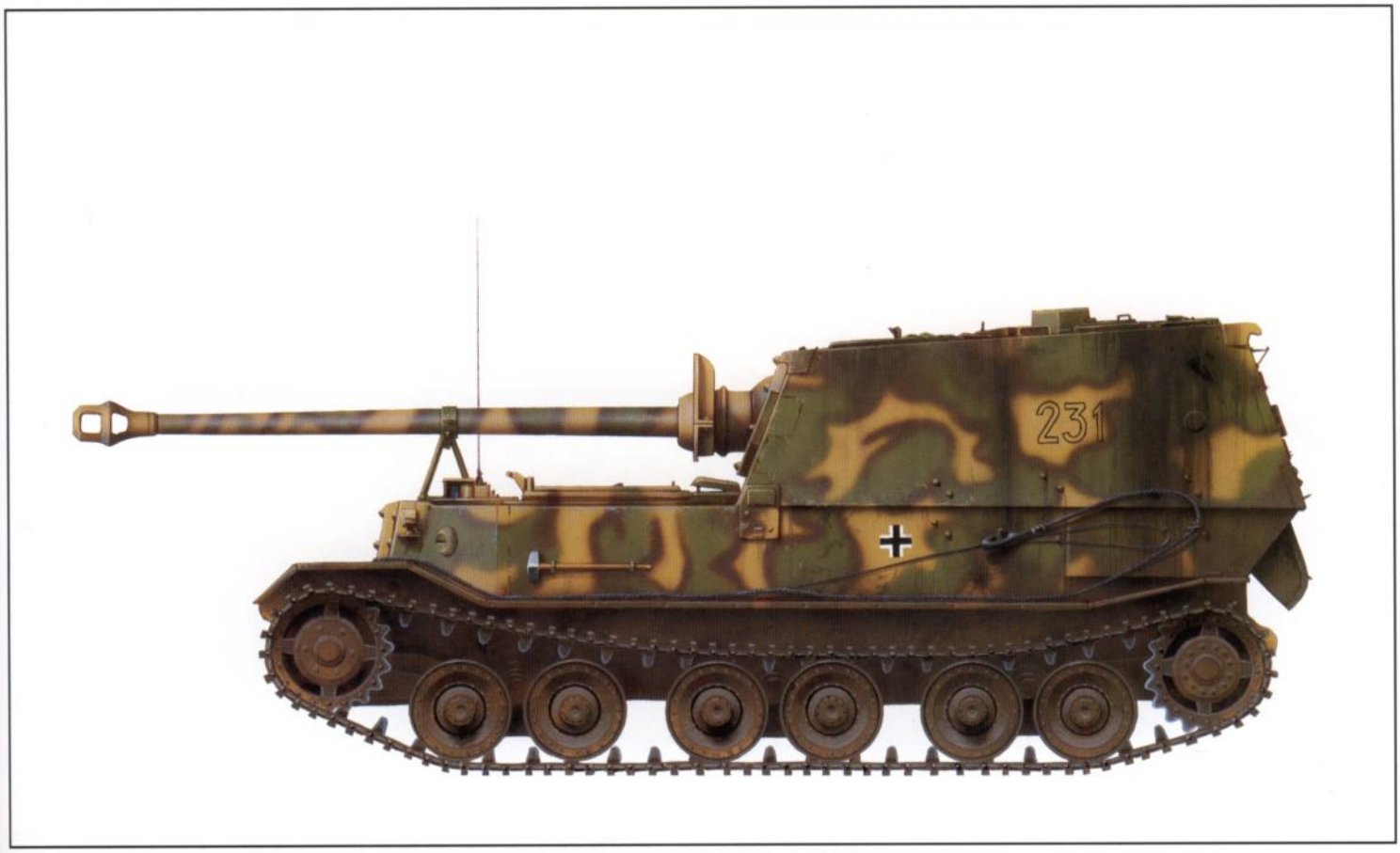
This vehicle is painted in its summer camouflage scheme of green and brown patches applied over the whole vehicle including the gun barrel. It has a two digital tactical number '39', which is painted in red with a white outline. Below the tactical number there is a small national cross-painted in black with a white outline.



Krupp Protze, 4.Panzer-Division, winter 1942

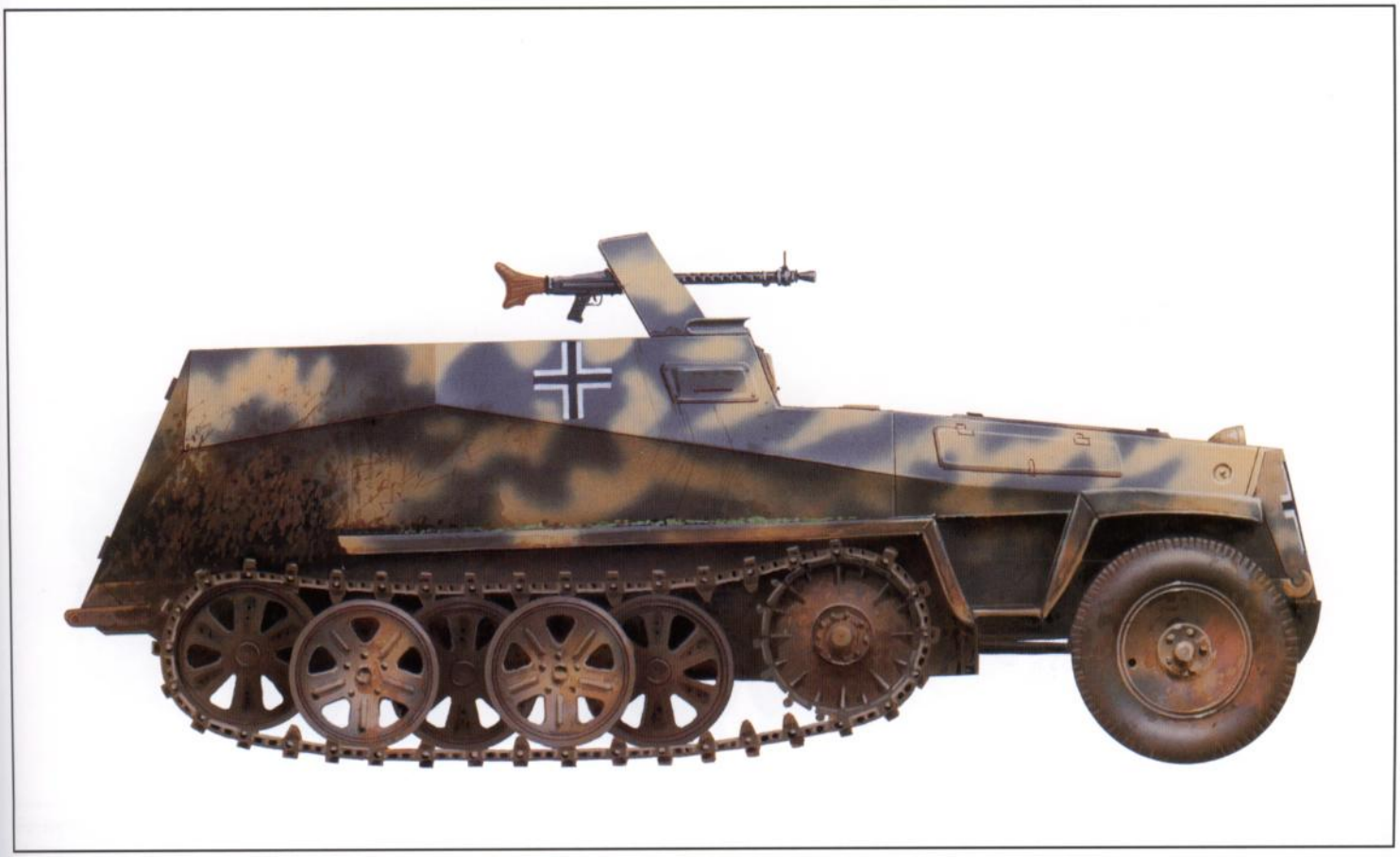
This 1.5ton Krupp Protze truck towing a 2cm FlaK30 anti-aircraft gun has received a full coat of winter whitewash paint. The green canvas cover over the cargo compartment and the gun have also been camouflaged with whitewash.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer



Panzerjäger Tiger (P) Ferdinand, 2./s/Pz.Jg.Abt.653, Orel, summer 1943

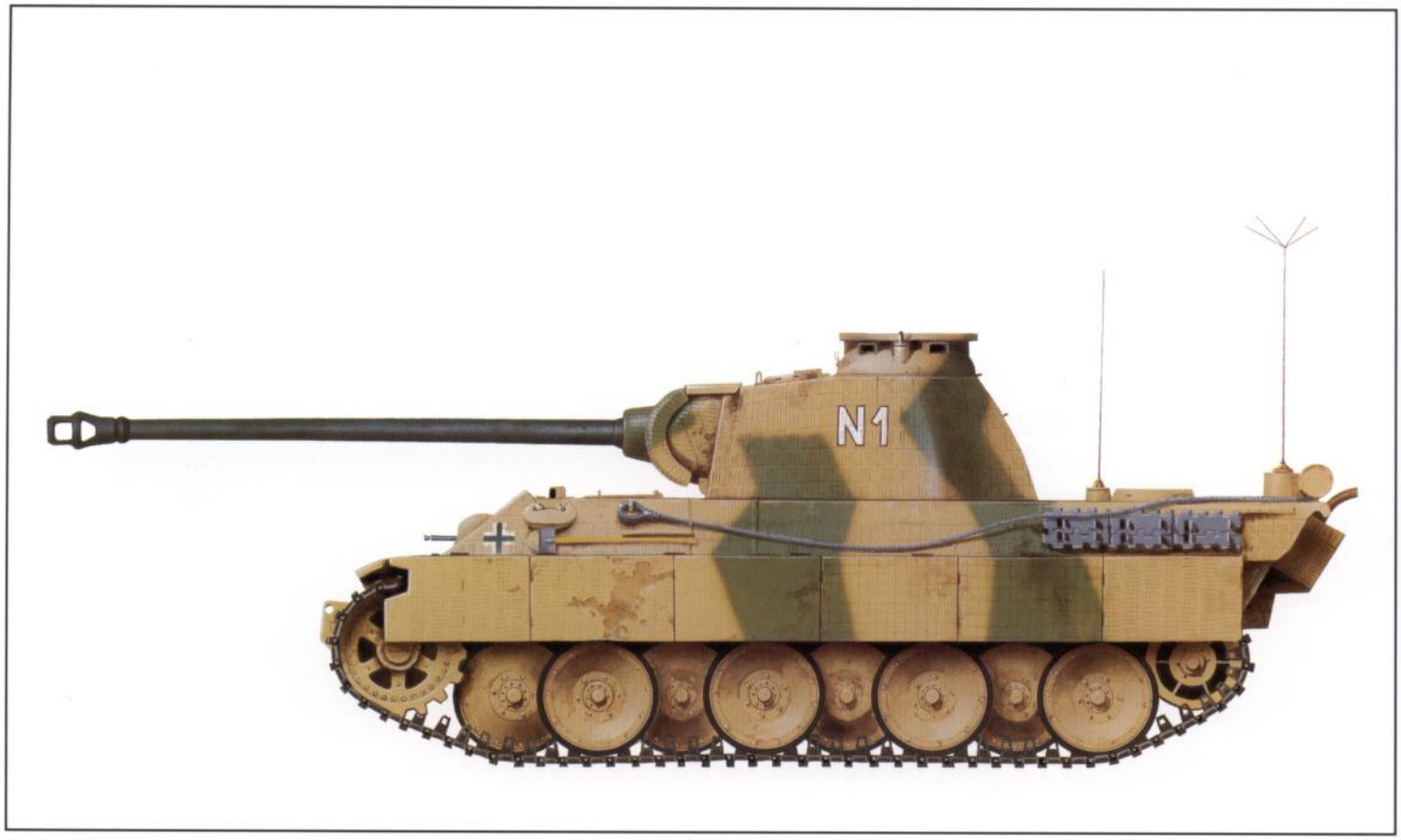
This Ferdinand carries a light sand base but with a summer camouflage pattern of light green sprayed over. The three digit tactical number '231' has been painted with a thin black outline.



Sd.Kfz.250/1, unknown Panzer-Division, Russia, autumn 1943

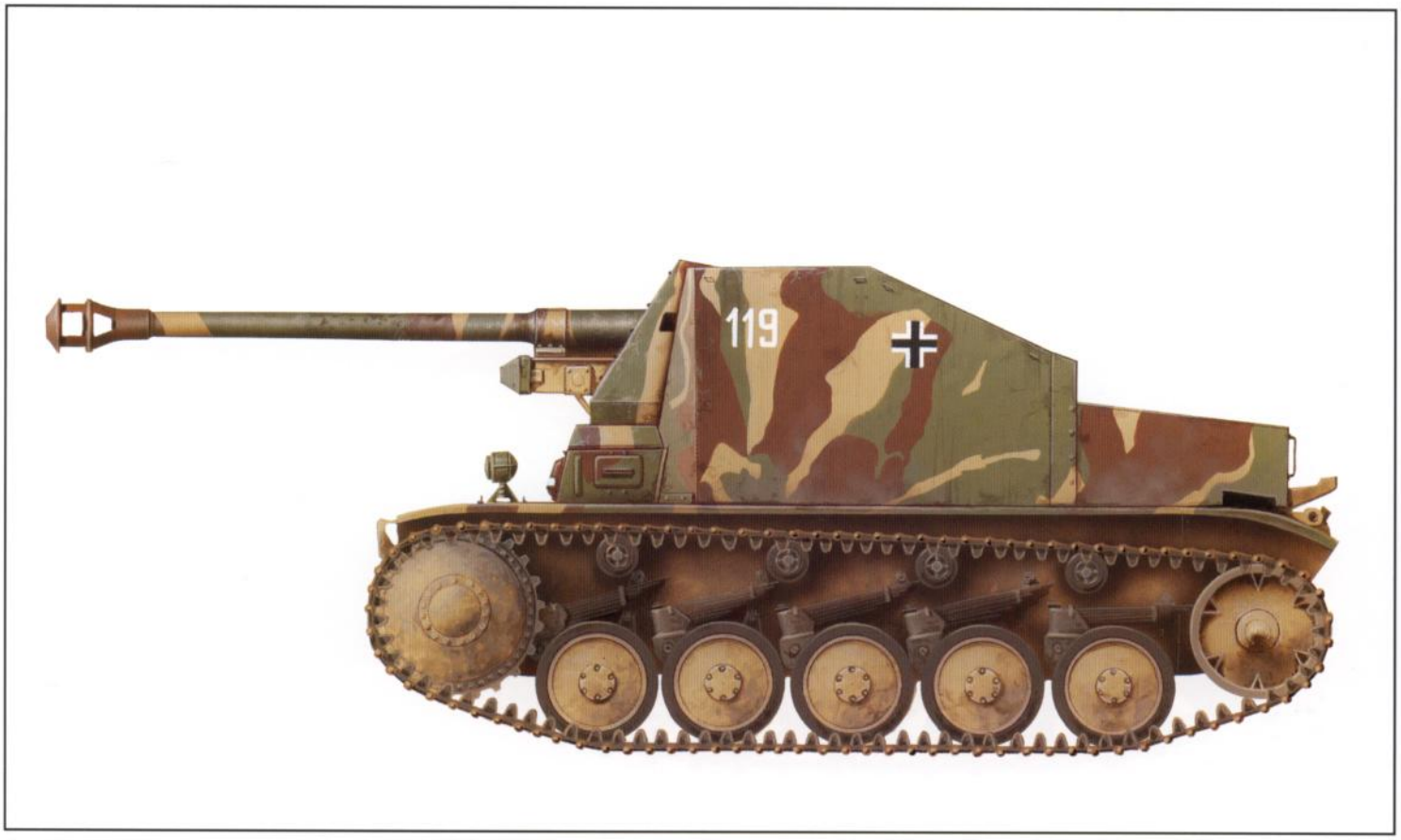
This Sd.Kfz.250/1 has a camouflage spray of large spots of dark sand over the dark gray base, including the MG34 machine gun shield.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer



Pz.Bef.Wg.V Panther Ausf.A, Pz.Gren.Div. 'Großdeutschland', Lithuania, summer 1944

This Panther is painted with a camouflage scheme of large green vertical stripes applied over an overall dark sand base. The tactical number 'N1', is painted in yellow with a thin black outline.



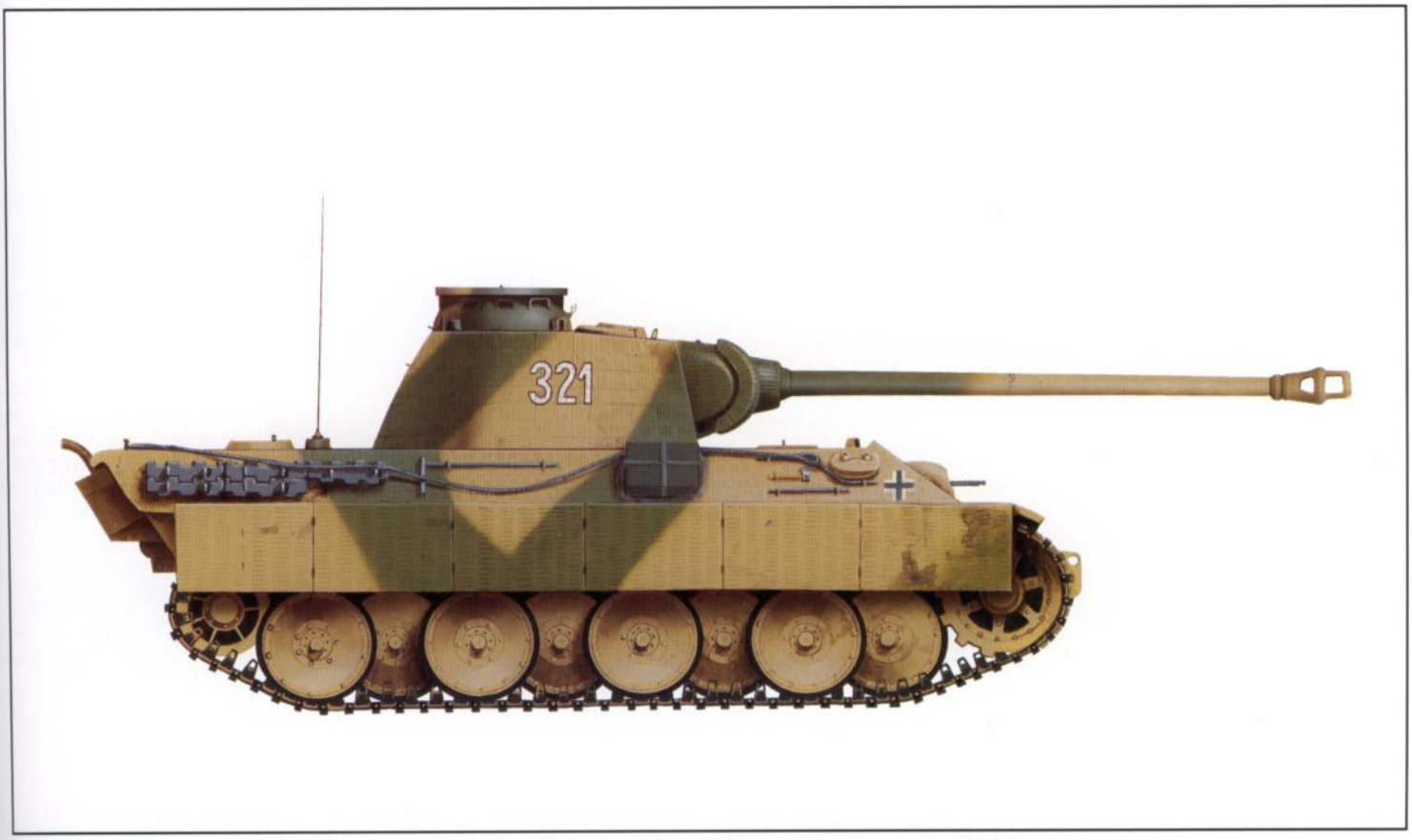
Sd.Kfz.131 Marder II, Pz.Jg.Abt.49, Eastern Front, summer 1944

This Marder II, seen in the summer of 1944 displays its summer scheme of brown and green lines over the dark sand base. The tactical number '119' is painted in white. It displays the standard national cross in black with a white outline.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Sd.Kfz.251/1 Ausf.C, unknown Pz.Gren.Rgt., Eastern Front, summer 1944

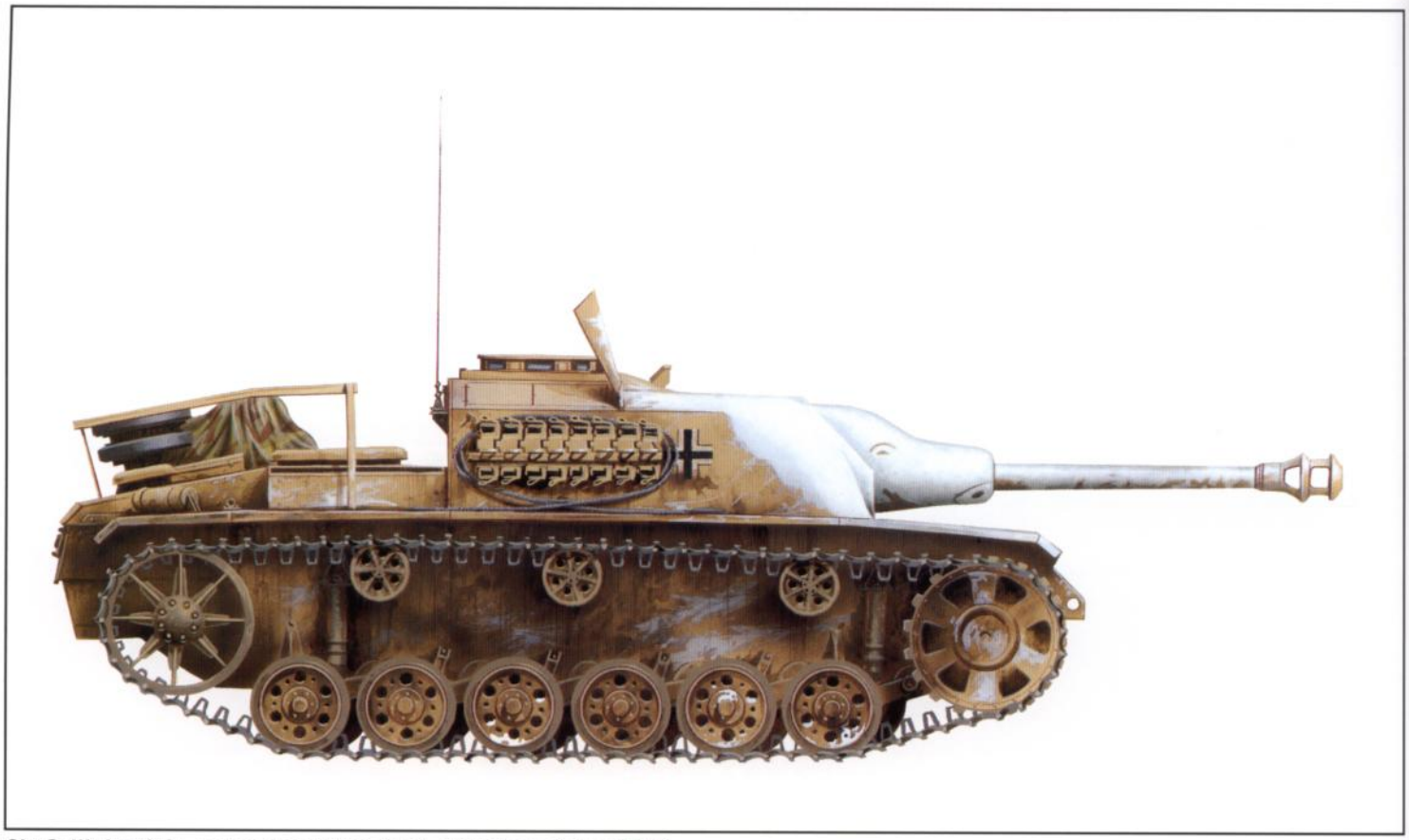
This Sd.Kfz.251/1 Ausf.C has received a crude application of paint. Applied over the dark gray a dark sand paint has been brushed on in crosses to form a camouflage scheme. Even the MG34 machine gun shield has received a coat.



Pz.Kpfw.V Panther Ausf.A, Pz.Gren.Div. 'Großdeutschland', Lithuania, summer 1944

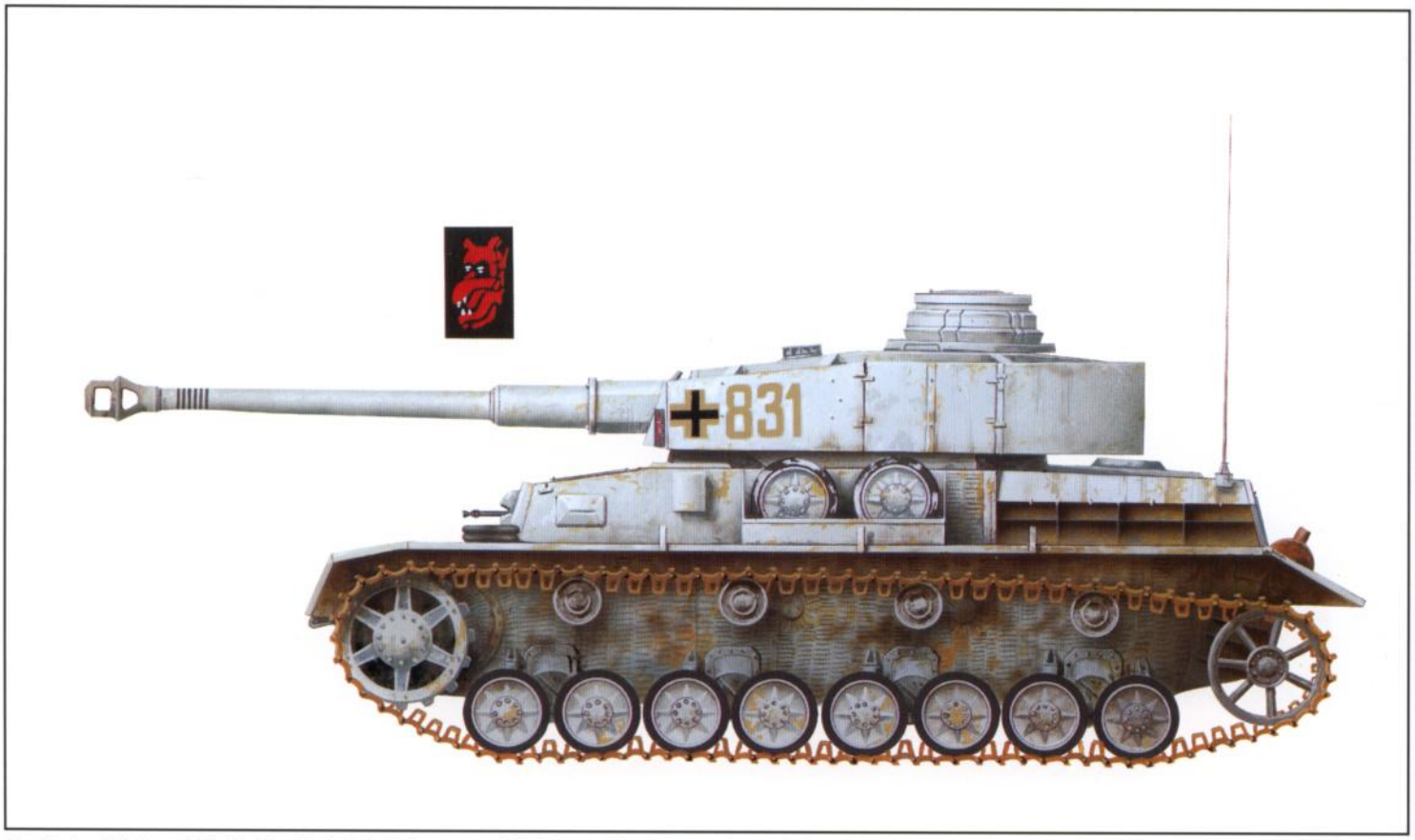
This late model Panther Ausf.A is painted in overall dark yellow with large dark green vertical stripes. The tactical number '321' is painted in yellow with black outline. A standard black and white national cross is painted on the side of the hull in front of the tool stowage brackets and is repeated on the rear of the hull between the exhaust pipes.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer



StuG III Ausf.G, unknown StuG Abt., Russia, winter 1944

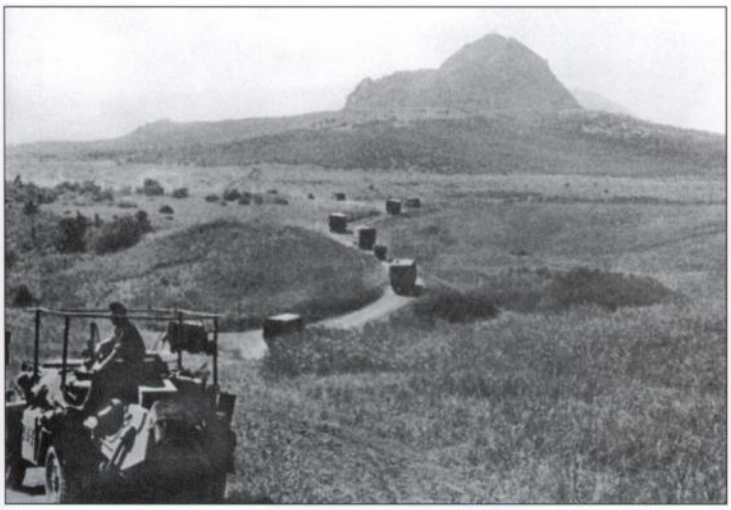
This StuG has lost all its schürzen in combat. The vehicle has most of its winter whitewash camouflage paint missing, revealing its overall summer dark sand camouflage scheme.



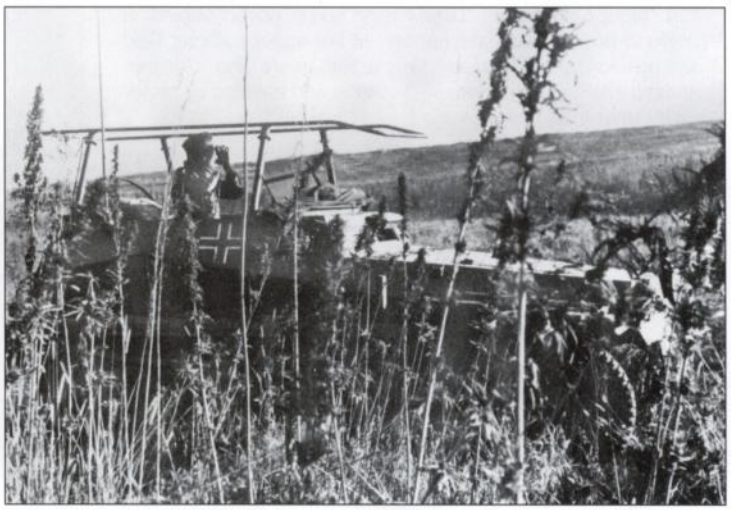
Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.H, 8./Pz.Rgt.31, 5.Panzer-Division, East Prussia, winter 1944-45

This Pz.Kpfw.IV has received a complete application of winter whitewash paint. The tank carries a three digit tactical number '831', which appears to be painted in dark yellow, on the side of the turret skirt armor. The divisional emblem, a red devil's head on a black rectangle, has been painted on the front of the skirt armor as well.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer



A long column of vehicles belonging to an unidentified Panzer-Division somewhere near to the Caucasus Mountains, during early September 1942. In the foreground a communication Sd.Kfz.221 or 223 light armored car belonging to a reconnaissance battalion can be seen, but no markings are visible.



From his Sd.Kfz.250/3 communications half-track a commander scours enemy terrain whilst hidden in undergrowth somewhere in southern Russia in September 1942.

Two photographs showing armored vehicles of a Panzer-Division during heavy fighting in the central sector of the Eastern Front. These photos were taken northwest of Kaluga in early September 1942. These vehicles more than likely belong to the 19.Panzer-Division, which was involved in the 'Wirbelwind' offensive during the second half of August. The offensive, however, ended in complete failure with the 19.Panzer-Division losing vast amounts of men and equipment.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

A group of Panzer Grenadiers takes cover behind a Pz.Kpfw.III during heavy exchanges of fire against strong Red Army positions. The Panzer Grenadiers were the German motorized infantry in the Panzer-Divisions and traveled by motor vehicle rather than on foot.

A break in combat somewhere on the central sector of the front in July 1942. During this period there were 8 Panzer-Divisions grouped in H.Gr.Mitte, but were all very weak and unable to smash enemy resistance completely.

An Sd.Kfz.8 tows a truck along a forest road, possibly in the Rzhev area in late July 1942. By this time the Panzer-Divisions were fighting deep inside Russia. Confronted by bitter opposition many units were worn down to half-strength, and the Panzers were down to two-fifths of their original tank strength.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Three photographs showing leading elements of a Panzer-Division during its advance on Stalingrad in July and August 1942. The Pz.Kpfw.III is attached to the 24.Panzer-Division. Note the unit insignia on the left mudguard indicating that it belongs to the 'cavalry' division of the Panzerwaffe. The letter 'K' painted in white on the left mudguard indicates it belongs to Pz.Gr. Kleist. During the early years of the war on the Eastern Front the Pz.Kpfw.III was the main battle tank. However, in response to growing encounters with superior Red Army tanks, the Germans began developing new tanks as well as up gunning existing models.

A group of heavily camouflaged armored vehicles halt in a field whilst under heavy systematic bombardment somewhere in Russia in July 1942.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

A heavy Horch cross-country car crosses a pontoon bridge somewhere along the Don bend in the middle of July 1942. Of interest is the vehicle's identification card fixed to the windshield. Note the large letter 'F' painted in white and attached to the mudguard.

An armored column of a Panzer-Division makes a sweeping drive towards Stalingrad. Moving through a newly captured Soviet village Panzer Grenadiers board an Sd.Kfz.251. Right of the half-track is a Marder self-propelled gun with the Pz.Kpfw.38(t) chassis.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

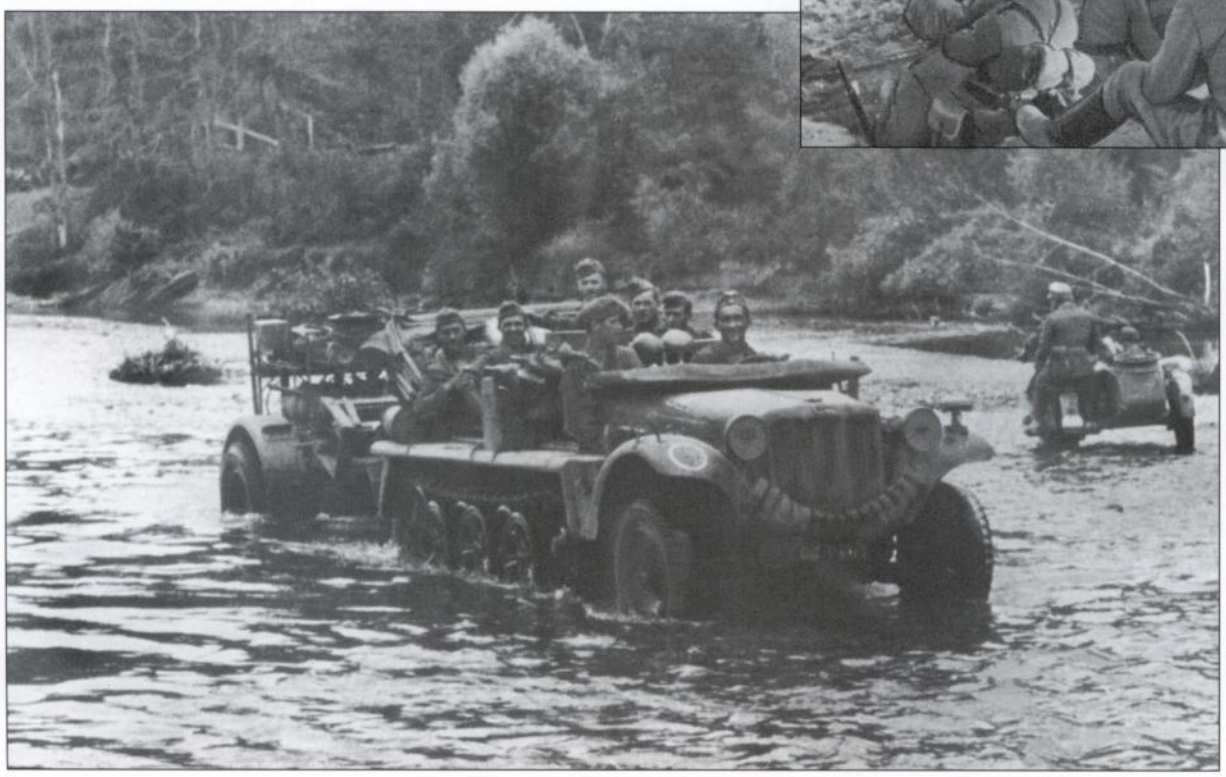
Soldiers of the 23.Panzer-Division clear a road in order to allow the safe advance of its divisional reconnaissance Abteilung on its way to Stalingrad. On the right is a Sd.Kfz.250/10, which is armed with a PaK 3.7cm gun, minus its armored shield. Note the cover of the gun barrel's inlet fixed to the main part of the gun with chain. In the background a standard Sd.Kfz.250 can be seen. On its frontal plate we can see a 24.Panzer-Division emblem on the left and on the right the tactical sign indicating that it belongs to the 2.Kradschützen Kompanie.

An Sd.Kfz.7 towing a staff Pz.Kpfw.II across a small light bridge built over a stream. This prime mover is marked with the divisional emblem on the left mudguard and a 'W8' code on the right. The two license plates WH 868896 are painted in black or red with a white outline on the side.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

A group of vehicles belonging to the 24.Panzer-Division under attack as they approach the Volga River in August 1942. Spread out across the field is a Sd.Kfz.250 communication vehicle, probably attached to an artillery unit. There is also a number of Sd.Kfz.251 half-tracks and a Pz.Bef.Wg.III with the tactical number '373' painted in white. The tactical sign indicates that it is the staff vehicle of the I./Pz.Rgt. of the 24.Panzer-Division.

A group of soldiers belonging to the 24.Panzer-Division inside the decimated city limits of Stalingrad in September 1942. The tank in the background is a Pz.Kpfw.III. The battle of Stalingrad was a crucial test of attrition for both the Wehrmacht and Panzerwaffe. Across the rubble strewn streets armored vehicles were subjected to a series of sustained attacks that quickly led to a dramatic decline in equipment. This in turn resulted in troops being constantly exposed to hostile fire.



Here wading a river is a Sd.Kfz.10 towing a rocket launcher somewhere in the Caucasus region in early September 1942. Note the divisional emblem painted on the left mudguard. In the background a motorcycle sidecar combination can also be seen in the river. No other markings are visible on the two vehicles.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Troops onboard an Sd.Kfz.10 advance along a road somewhere in southern Russia in September 1942. The Sd.Kfz.10 was the standard prime mover in the anti-tank battalions of the Panzer-Divisions. But with shortages in equipment mounting to a new high level by this period, many of the units were compelled to press into service a variety of vehicles including captured Russian and French vehicles.

Two half-tracks can be seen following a pause in heavy fighting in the battle of Stalingrad. Dismounted troops are visible standing next to the armored vehicles. On the left is a Sd.Kfz.251/1, and on the right a Sd.Kfz.250/3. Both half-tracks have no markings, except the national cross-painted on the side.

A Kampfgruppe enters a captured Soviet village in late summer 1942. The leading vehicle is a Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.J with a late cupola. This tank more than likely retains the early style of tactical numbering, white painted numbers on a block rhomboid shaped metal plate. Following closely behind is an Sd.Kfz.251/10 half-track. Note the 3.7cm gun with camouflaged armored shield.

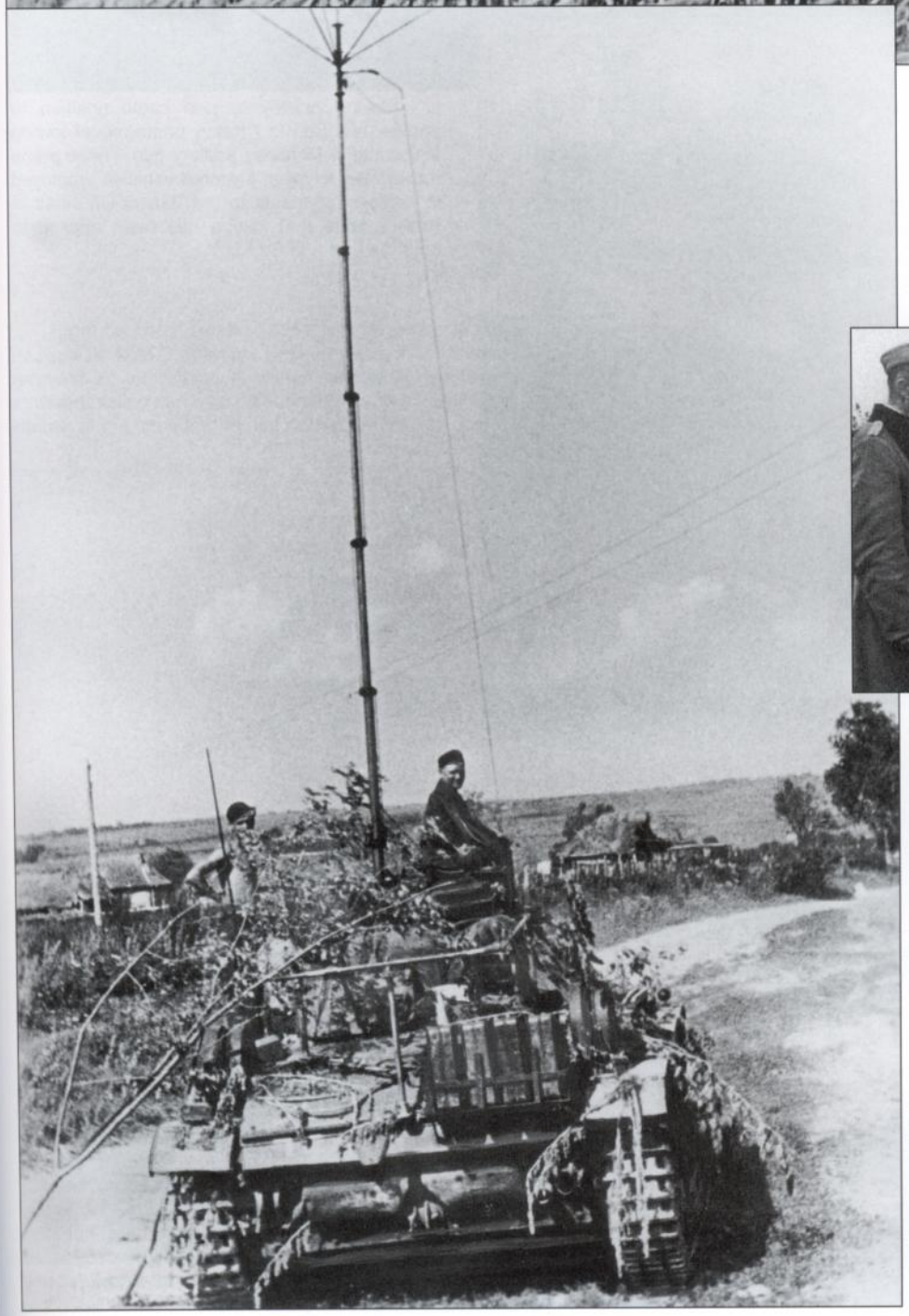
Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

A group of Panzer Grenadiers hitches a lift onboard a Pz.Kpfw.IV, armed with the long barreled 7.5cm gun. This vehicle is more than likely an Ausf.G variant. In the Panzer-Divisions the Panzer Grenadiers would accompany the armored spearhead, mounted on board tanks in the first wave, and followed immediately by a second wave of Panzer Grenadiers in armored half-tracks who would overcome enemy positions that had survived the first wave.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

An unidentified light Panzer platoon in a cornfield during operations somewhere in southern Russia in the summer of 1942. A group of Pz.Kpfw.II's and Pz.Kpfw.IV's can be seen advancing through the field. Despite the Pz.Kpfw.II ineffectiveness on the front lines in Russia, it was still used in a number of units in 1942. However, by early 1943 the tank began to be phased out and withdrawn from operational duties.

In this photograph General Schell is talking to General Krüger, commander of a Panzer-Division involved in major fighting on the central sector of the Eastern Front during July and August 1942. Both generals were winners of the Ritterkreuz (Knight's Cross) for their achievements in previous campaigns.



A Pz.Bef.Wg.III with its 5-meter long antenna mast in its full position. Because of the sheer length of the star mast the vehicle could only operate effectively when it had stopped in the field. Note the style of fixing and the additional antenna links. Foliage has also been applied over the vehicle in order to break up its shape and avoid detection from the air.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Moving quickly to one battle position to another is a Sd.Kfz.7 heavy prime mover towing a 15cm sFH 18 heavy artillery gun. These prime movers were typical armored vehicles employed in artillery regiments in the Panzer-Divisions in Russia. Note that foliage has been applied to both the gun and Sd.Kfz.7.

An MG squad is preparing to board a group of Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.J tanks. In Russia a great number of troops constantly found themselves thrust into battle alongside armored Panzer-Divisions. Apart from the usual transportation of trucks and half-tracks they would regularly hitch a lift on a tank, which offered them not only armored protection and mobility, but enabled them to get close enough to attack enemy positions quickly and effectively.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

A vehicle wades through water following a heavy downpour somewhere in Russia in October 1942. The mud produced from a few hours of rain was enough to immobilize whole columns of wheeled transport, and even tanks. Nor was the rain the only problem: the wet season on the Eastern Front began about October, when the first snows came.

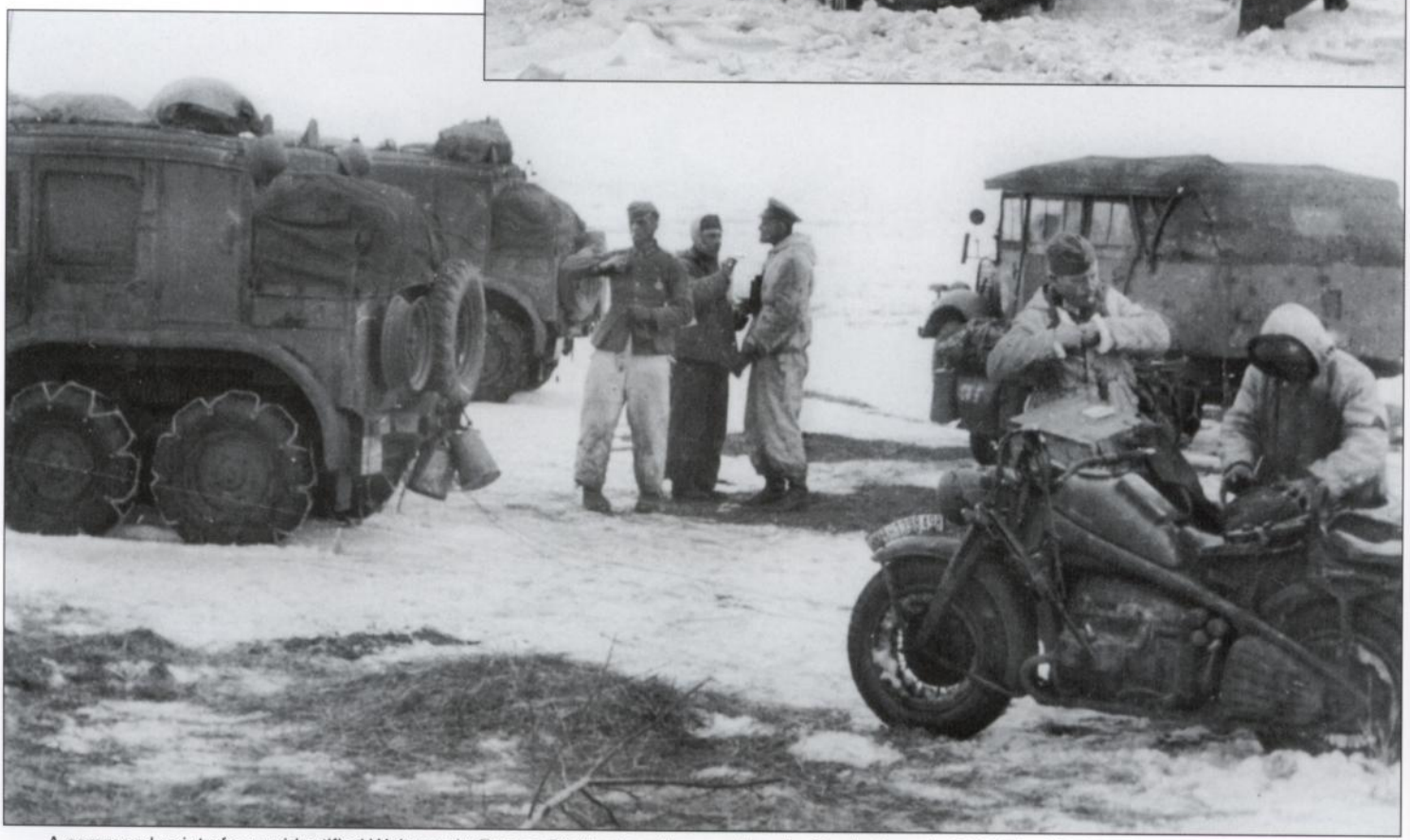
From his hatch exposed to the hostile winter elements a crewman of a Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.G attempts to keep warm. Note that the tank has already received an application of winter camouflage whitewash paint. Additional armored plating can also be seen fixed to the front of the superstructure. Of interest is the censored frontal part of the KwK40 barrel.

An Sd.Kfz.251/1 Ausf.B halts in a field somewhere in southern Russia. Note the interesting unit white fish emblem, which is painted in white on the side of the half-track. On this particular vehicle neither sand bags or a shield is providing protection for the MG34 machinegun crew.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

A pair of RK winners, Obfw. Becker and Fw. Niemeck, who received high decorations for their achievements during the winter battles for Kharkov in February-March 1943. Becker had single handedly knocked out 23 Soviet tanks, whilst Niemeck destroyed a staggering 32 enemy tanks, 15 of them between 22 February and 7 March 1943.

Here the crew of a Horch Kfz.18 are digging out their cross-country vehicle following a heavy snowstorm in the central sector of the Eastern Front. The Horch is still carrying the Wehrmacht's distinctive dark gray camouflage paint, which is clearly an easy target to the enemy against the snow.



A command point of an unidentified Wehrmacht Panzer-Division's unit somewhere in Russia in early 1943. The Zündapp motorcycle visible on the right has a license plate WH 1398498, and all the vehicles are still painted in dark gray camouflage.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

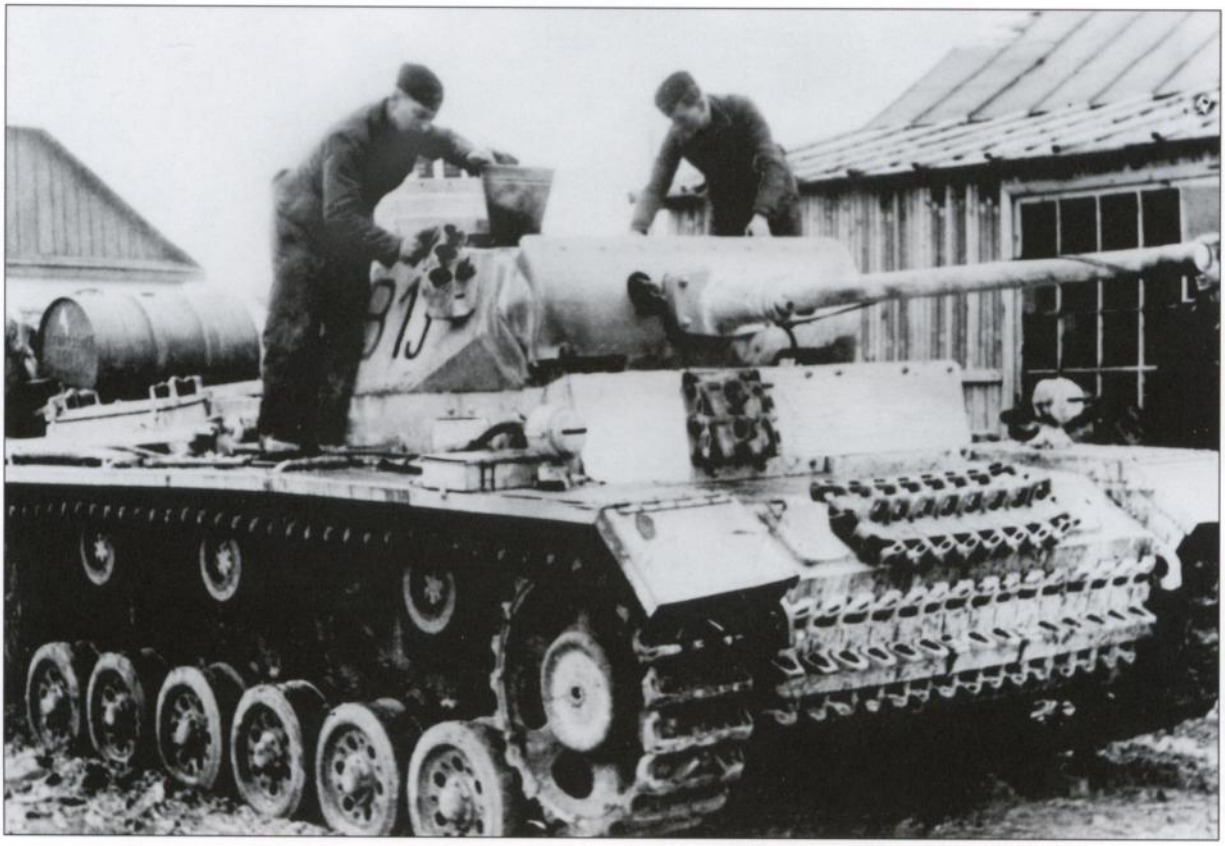
An Opel Blitz truck has become stuck in snow somewhere in northern Russia in early February 1943. The vehicle has received a coat of winter whitewash. Of interest is the animal fur attached to the vehicles bonnet. In sub zero temperatures crews found it very difficult to start the engines, and therefore went to great lengths to insulate their vehicles from the extreme cold.

Störungstrupp, lightly armed and wearing animal skin fur coats, are seen next to a Kübelwagen during a pause in their advance behind enemy lines during the early winter of 1943. Although these animal fur coats kept the men relatively warm and dry they quickly became soiled with dirt and became useless pieces of camouflage against the snow.

During a major counterattack a Marder II leads infantry out of a town in the Kharkov area in February/March 1943. This 7.5cm self-propelled anti-tank killer has received a very good application of winter whitewash paint, and its crew is well equipped for winter combat too. Note the unusual black national cross painted on frontal plate of the superstructure.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

The crew of a Pz.Kpfw.III with the tactical number '524' helps fellow comrades to recover another Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.M that has fallen through ice on a river. Both these vehicles saw action with the 1.SS-Pz.Gren.Div. 'LSSAH' during the battle for Kharkov in March 1943.



As the spring thaw arrives and vegetation once more begins to grow across the vast hinterland of the Soviet Union, the crew of this Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.M removes the winter whitewash paint, to make it more suitable for frontline service. On the turret the tank has the tactical number '813' painted in red with a white outline. Note the fuel drum installed on the engine deck and the censored armor on the superstructure front.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

An Sd.Kfz.9 heavy prime mover of a Panzer-Regiment's recovery detachment tows a damaged vehicle on a trailer during mid March 1943. The recovery detachments were a very important component to a Panzer-Division, especially with the number of mechanical breakdowns during the winter months of 1943.

Two photographs showing SS troops and armored vehicles during the spring thaw of 1943, just after the recapture of Kharkov. It is possible that both photos show the same area as the divisional emblem of the SS-Pz.Gren.Div. 'Totenkopf' can be seen on the left mudguard of the Sd.Kfz.10.

Moving across a lake a pair of soldiers pose for the camera as they ride in an Schwimmwagen. The Schwimmwagen was uniquely designed to be amphibious. Note that the exhaust has been elevated and attached on the rear to prevent the inlet of water.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Two interesting photographs showing new recruits undergoing close-range anti-tank training in the early summer of 1943. Of interest is the Pz.Kpfw.I Ausf.F which had only 30 vehicles produced, and one of them we can see here with the emblem of 13.Pol.Pz.Kp. painted in white on the left side of the frontal plate (094).

A grenadier onboard an Sd.Kfz.250 half-track during the battle of Kursk. The soldier is armed with an MG34 machine gun and protected by the gun shield. These half-tracks were often seen in the thick of battle, debussing their troops and mopping up the enemy before returning to be moved to another battle line.

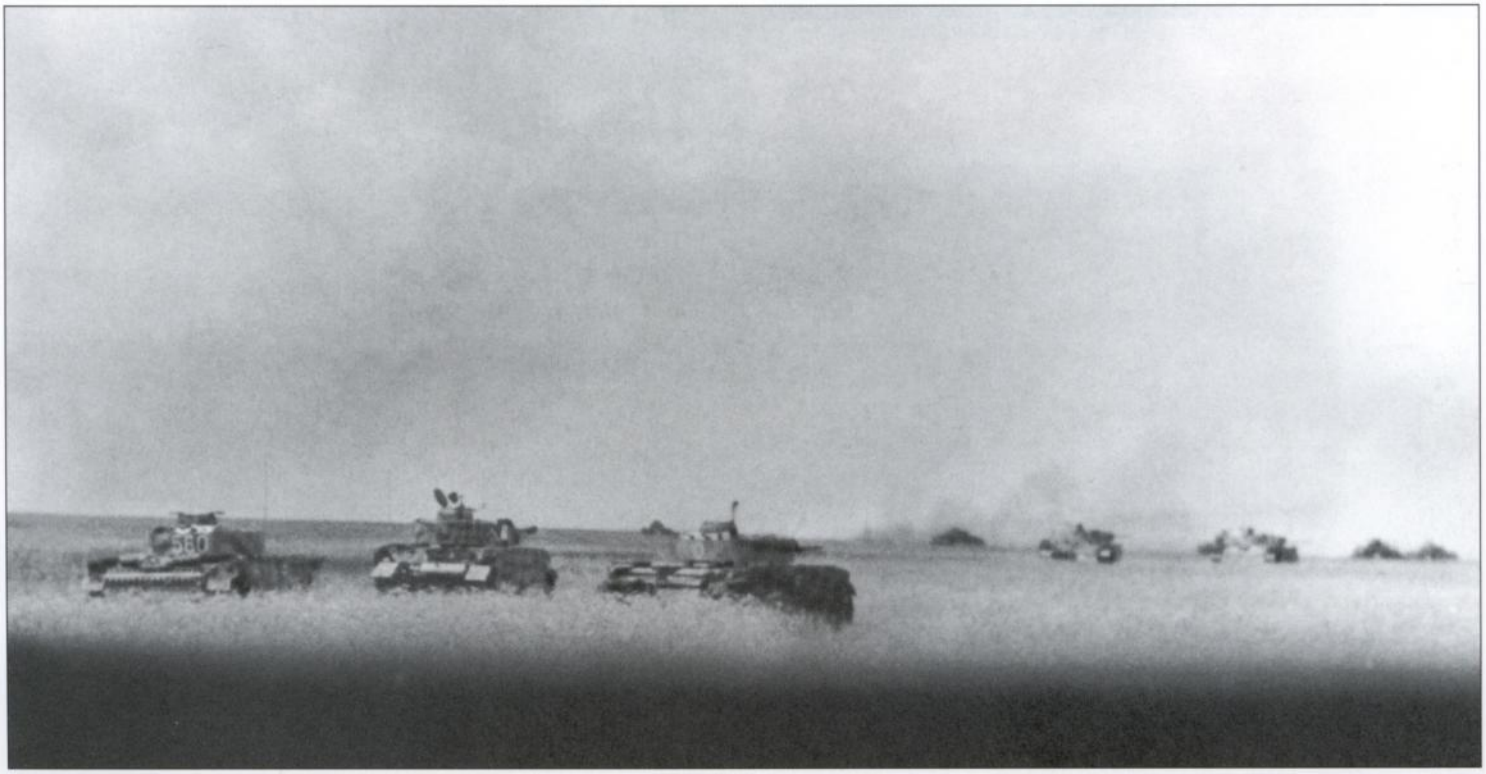
Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Three photos taken at Borrisovka, where Germans fought hard during the battle for Kharkov, in late May 1943. Officers of different divisions and staff units discuss and analyze the coming battle. Among others are 'Sepp' Dietrich, Strachwitz of 'Großdeutschland', and Balck, all of them decorated with RK. Dietrich is visible in the background on the photo showing Strachwitz by the board, and on another one we can see his back with Strachwitz on his left and Balck his right. On the third photo only Strachwitz is visible in his staff Horch while talking to officers.

Artillery soldiers reloading the Nebelwerfer from a Sd.Kfz.11 prime mover. Nebelwerfer units played a major part in artillery support during the initial stages of Operation Zitadelle. They were extensively employed in the Panzer-Divisions that fought in the Kursk salient in July 1943.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Soviet POWs watch in awe as a column of Pz.Kpfw.IV and Pz.Kpfw.III of the SS-Pz.Gren.Div. 'Totenkopf' move along a road in the Kursk salient. The closest tank has a white unit emblem of three vertical stripes painted at the rear for this action.



A group of staff Pz.Kpfw.III and Pz.Kpfw.IV in the Kursk sector in July 1943. The tank on the left has the tactical number '560' painted in red with a white outline on the side of its turret skirting. The Pz.Kpfw.III on the extreme right has the tactical number '0', also painted in red with a white outline. All three tanks carry a three-color camouflage pattern of brown and green lines over the dark sand base.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

A group of SS Panzer Grenadier troops onboard a Pz.Kpfw.IV during the Kursk offensive. By 13 July 1943, the Red Army had dealt the SS and Wehrmacht Panzer-Divisions a severe battering from which the German war effort was never to recover. The Germans lost 30 of its divisions, including 7 Panzer-Divisions. Some 50,000 German troops were reported killed or missing. The final nail in the coffin for the German Army was when Hitler decided to withdraw the 'Totenkopf', 'Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler' and 'Das Reich' Divisions from Kursk.

Waffen-SS soldiers of a reconnaissance battalion with captured Soviet soldiers during heavy fighting south of Kursk in August 1943. There are two heavy armored cars, including a Sd.Kfz.232 (8-rad) radio vehicle equipped with a frame antenna. Both vehicles carry a three-color camouflage pattern of brown and green lines over the dark sand base. No other markings are evident.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

A photograph showing Wehrmacht troops being supported by a StuG III during Operation Zitadelle in July 1943. Assault guns and tank destroyers were a valuable contribution in the Panzer-Divisions and provided vital support for the troops in battle. It was at Kursk that it showed its true capabilities as a tank killer. In one tank battle a Waffen-SS assault gun battalion destroyed 129 Soviet tanks for the loss of just two assault guns.

Two photographs showing the full effects of a heavy downpour of rain in the summer of 1943. Both tracked and wheeled vehicles in the Panzer-Divisions could be severely hampered by just a brief downpour, which could easily reduce a dusty uneven road to a slough of mire. In western Russia, for instance, the all-weather roads had not been constructed to carry the amount and weight of traffic that now used them, and surfaces began to break up under the strain. In many areas the roads were reduced to a mud track nearly a meter deep in places. In these conditions, horses were often used, but hundreds of them died from heart strain brought on by the efforts to haul the heavy loads of stranded vehicles or artillery pieces through the mud.

A group of Pz.Kpfw.III moves across a field during in late summer of 1943. The tank on the right has the tactical number, '211', painted in red on the rear of the turret bin.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

A close-up view of the fighting compartment of a Hummel or Hornisse vehicle. Note the illegible inscription written on it with chalk.

A photograph showing a crewmember of a Pz.Kpfw.III aiming his gun on a selected target. This crewmember is more than likely the 'gun layer' who was responsible for aiming and firing the main gun. Sighting was normally undertaken through binoculars or monocular sights or both.

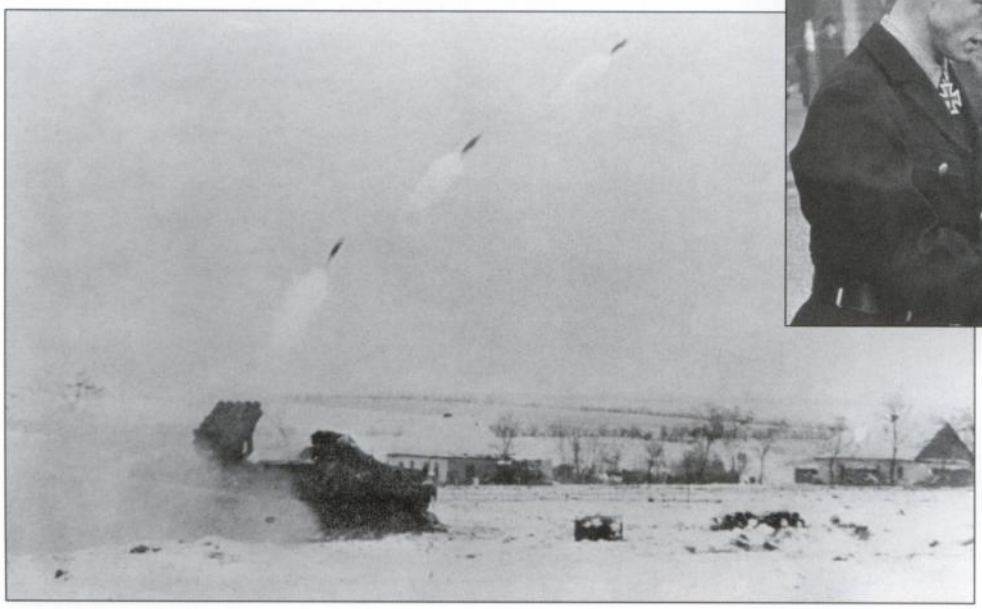
A close up view of a Waffen-SS Sd.Kfz.251/7 moving through a burning village in the southern sector of the Eastern Front in the late summer or early autumn of 1943. Lack of armored personnel carriers forced division staffs to armor only one company per engineering battalion, what made them weaker.

A close up view of a Sd.Kfz.222 armored car, most probably belonging to an SS division. This vehicle was four-wheeled and carried a 2cm KwK38 cannon and co-axial MG34 mounted in a 10-sided, open-topped rotating turret. The wire-mesh hood protected the turret top against possible grenade attacks.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Caught on camera in the thick of battle is an Sd.Kfz.250/1 with a group of armed Waffen-SS troops. The half-track is storming an unidentified village in one of the many counterattacks that took place against strong Soviet troops assaulting German positions on Dnieper River in the autumn 1943. The vehicle still carries the old camouflage pattern, composed of sand spots applied on the dark gray background. Of interest is the national cross painted on the frontal plate, a rare practice.

A Panzer soldier is decorated with a Knight's Cross after being wounded in battle during the late summer of 1943. The congratulating officer is General Doff, while in the background we can see Leutnant Gerhard Stöck.



An Sd.Kfz.4/1 launches NbW42 rockets against strongly held enemy positions during early 1944. In the Panzer-Divisions the majority of rocket units armed with the deadly multi-barreled rocket-launchers were attached to special rocket artillery battalions. Although designed primarily as an anti-personnel weapon, these rockets proved lethal against open soft-skinned vehicles. Even the blast effect could seriously concuss a Soviet T-34 tank crew.

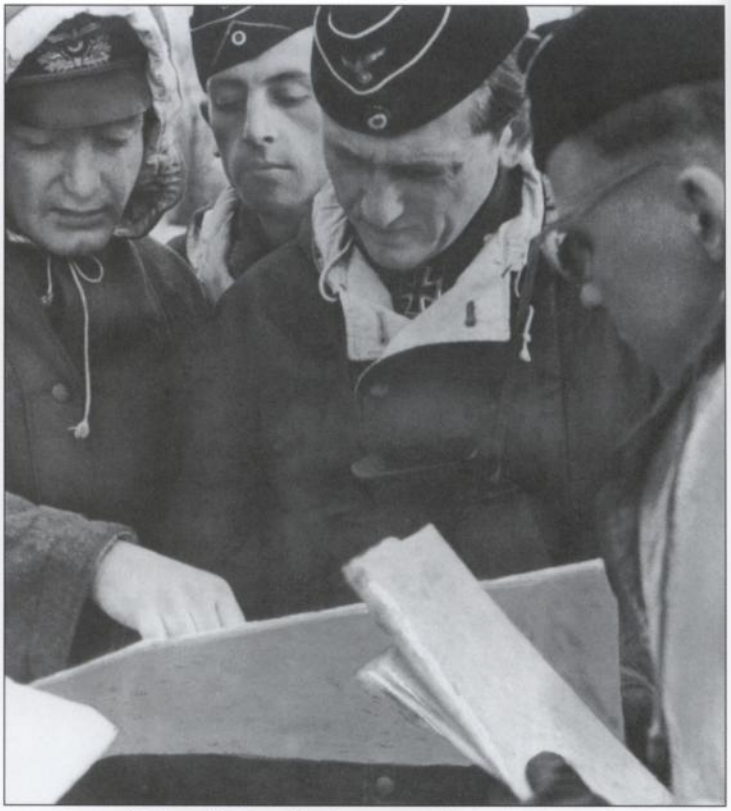
Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

A rare vehicle in the Panzerwaffe inventory in late 1943 is this Sd.Kfz.253 armored observation post, which can be seen behind a group of Soviet POWs. A soldier is visible using a portable radio set inside the crew compartment of this half-track. By this period of the war the half-track proved steadily more vulnerable to enemy fire. In late 1943 the half-track had reverted to their original role of transporting troops of the Panzer-Divisions to the forward edge of the battlefield, where the troops de-bussed prior to engaging the enemy.

An Sd.Kfz 250/5 communication vehicle heavily laded with combat equipment during the autumn of 1943. The vehicle is painted in overall dark sand with a random application of green and brown camouflage wavy lines. It carries the staff markings, '011', probably painted in red with a white outline. On the license plate we can see WH144491. However, although this vehicle belongs to the Wehrmacht a Waffen-SS soldier can be seen on board.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

The crew of a StuG III assault gun repairs a broken track during winter operations in early 1944. During the later part of the war the StuG III was increasingly used in an anti-tank role and thus gradually deprived Panzer Grenadiers of the fire support they so desperately needed.



General Bäke with the aid of a map confers with his staff officers the military situation in the first half of 1944. This photograph was probably taken after the famous battle fought by him in the Ukraine in March of this year. He had distinguished himself when he scraped together the remains of a number of decimated divisions in southern Russia and built an ad hoc unit called 'Regiment-Bäke'.

A heavily camouflaged Pz.Beob.Wg.III of a Panzer-Division's artillery regiment. The photograph was taken in January or February 1944, in central Russia. This particular model is armed with a dummy gun.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

A large column of armored vehicles and troops belonging to a Panzer-Division on the march towards the front lines in March 1944. These vehicles and soldiers are probably part of the 4.Panzer-Division. Note the divisional emblem painted on the rear plate of the nearest tank, which is very similar to the one used in this division.

Soldiers of a signal battalion, with the use of an old Sd.Kfz.251 Ausf.C, check phone lines in the northern sector of the Eastern Front sometime in March 1944. The vehicle is liberally covered with a coat of white winter camouflage paint. Note the tactical markings painted in white on the left mudguard denoting that the half-track is attached to a communication unit.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

General Model confers with a crewmember of a Hummel, which has experienced its first combat successes. Note the four kill rings painted in white on the barrel. The Hummel was a highly effective self-propelled heavy howitzer. However, the Panzer-Divisions had suffered such massive losses in tanks that the Hummel hardly elevated the deteriorating situation in the East.

A liaison troop of a divisional unit on a road in April 1944. Note the vehicle equipped with a 5-meter long star-antenna radio set for long-range communication. In early 1944 the Panzer-Divisions in Russia had severe difficulties with logistical support due to the lack of transport and accessible roads covered in deep snow. As for the Soviets they made good use of the German difficulties and prepared their defenses in depth and were well equipped to fight.

Another photograph of General Model, this time inspecting a young soldier serving in an Sd.Kfz.251 Ausf.D in late April 1944. On 31 January 1944 Model was named Commander-in-Chief of Army Group North. He was the first commander in the Panzer-Divisions to introduce the 'Shield and Sword' policy, which stated that retreats were tolerable, but only if they paved the way for a counterstroke later.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Two photographs showing an ammunition dump with hundreds of spent wicker cases and wooden crates. Ford Maultier half-tracks can be seen in both the photographs. A medium prime mover Sd.Kfz.7, which still carries its winter whitewash, can also be seen. Note the Maultier parked next to it. This vehicle has an unusual tactical symbol of a heart painted on the right mudguard outlined in white. On the left mudguard it carries a tactical sign of an artillery unit. On the other photo, a RSO is next to the Maultier.

Moving steadily west, back towards the homeland an Sd.Kfz.10 towing a PaK 40 anti-tank gun follows horse drawn transport along a muddy road in the Romania-Soviet border in spring 1944. By this period of the war reserves were gone, the Panzer-Divisions in Russia were now only a shadow of its former self.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Inside an Sd.Kfz.251 a Panzer Grenadier armed with an MG34 machinegun supports a Tiger tank of sPz.Abt.507 whilst it storms a Soviet position in a village near Brody area in the spring of 1944. It was the use of the Tiger tank in the schwere Panzer-Divisions that contributed to some of the Panzerwaffe's most impressive exploits during the last year of the war on the Eastern Front.

A Panzer-Division's StuG unit during a brief respite following heavy fighting in Romania in May 1944. It was here that the 'Großdeutschland' Division fought a number of fierce battles in the spring of that year. The soldier on left is wearing a cuff armband with the name of his famous unit. However, all his comrades have no cuff armbands.

A commander of a Sd.Kfz.4/1 self-propelled multiple rocket launcher vehicle poses for the camera in May 1944. This photograph was more than likely taken for propaganda purposes as all the crew members had to hide in the vehicle prior to firing the missiles. Note the details of the launcher tubes installation.

Part of a divisional StuG unit with its column of supplies in May 1944. There are a variety of stationary vehicles in the column including a Maultier half-track and Opel Blitz trucks. StuGs can be seen visible in the background. This unit was part of a StuG Abteilung of the famous Panzer-Grenadier Division 'Großdeutschland'.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

A column of SS armored personal carriers moving across a dirt road in July 1944. We can see here the standard Sd.Kfz.251/1 Ausf.D, as well as the Sd.Kfz.251/9 Ausf.D armed with the deadly 7.5cm KwK 37 gun. All vehicles are carefully camouflaged, so even license plates are concealed under the paint. All the half-tracks have a summer camouflage scheme of green and brown applied over the dark yellow base. No markings have been added.

German Grenadiers enter a recaptured village in East Prussia during the autumn of 1944. The vehicle on the right is a Sd.Kfz.251/1 Ausf.D of the Panzer-Grenadier-Division 'Großdeutschland'. Note the divisional sign painted as a helmet on the top frontal plate of the half-track.

A Hornisse is embroiled in action during the retreat in central Russia in mid 1944. By this period of the war the Panzer-Divisions in the East had suffered massive losses. Each Panzer-Division barely had the required strength of more than 100 tanks, with new ones denied to old formations being used instead to build up fresh divisions.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

Two photographs showing Panthers belonging to the 5.SS-Panzer-Division 'Wiking' during operations near Warsaw in the autumn of 1944. The photos show the commander's tank with the tactical code 'K01' painted in white and applied over a coating of Zimmerit anti-mine paste.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

A Pz.Kpfw.IV and a Sd.Kfz.251/3 communication vehicle pass a destroyed building during heavy fighting in September 1944. By this period, what was left of the Panzer-Divisions in Russia now moved across into Poland and fought a number of defensive battles there. But as logistical problems increased, many tanks, half-tracks and assault guns were rendered useless with insufficient fuel.

A group of troops hitch a lift on board a StuG III as it goes into action in September 1944. The StuG provided soldiers with crucial mobile fire, which helped the thinly stretched and greatly outnumbered Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS troops, for whom armored reserves were now always scarce.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

A StuG III moving along a dirt track on its way to Warsaw in September or October 1944. At this time the StuGs were used as standard armament in many of the Panzer-Regiments, and later were replaced by another type of self-propelled gun called the Pz.Kpfw.IV/70.

A Hungarian citizen of Budapest greets a young German tank soldier after recapturing part of the city from the Soviets at the end of 1944. The picture needs no comment of the fear among Hungarians of the Russian occupation of the city.

Waffen-SS and Wehrmacht troops somewhere in the northern sector of the Eastern Front in late or early autumn 1944. The vehicle passing the group of soldiers is a Sd.Kfz.10 light prime mover towing an old 5cm PaK 38 anti tank gun. Note how the vehicle and gun have been heavily camouflaged with foliage.

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer

ISBN 962-361-076-9

Create PDF with GO2PDF for free, if you wish to remove this line, click here to buy Virtual PDF Printer